United Nations S/PV.6114

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6114th meeting

Wednesday, 29 April 2009, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Ms. Espinosa Cantellano/Mr. Heller	(Mexico)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Tiendrébéogo
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Guillermet
	Croatia	Mr. Vilović
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Shalgham
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Ilkin
	Uganda	Mr. Mugoya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158)

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09-31649 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Chad, Chile, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, the Netherlands, Peru, the Philippines, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand and Uruguay, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda.

In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to take this opportunity to welcome the fact that there is some much interest in participating in the debate on this issue, which is of particular importance for the international community.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend invitations under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/158, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

In my capacity as President, I should like to say how very honoured I am to be here today. My presence is an indication of the importance that Mexico attaches to the work of the Security Council and to its presidency. It also provides me an opportunity to thank all members for the support they have provided to Mexico's presidency throughout this month.

I would also like to point out that, as everyone is aware, Mexico is currently experiencing a very complex situation as a result of the emergence of swine flu, which has now begun to spread to other parts of the world. I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that the Mexican Government has acted with complete transparency and a sense of responsibility — not just towards Mexican citizens but also towards all of the world's inhabitants. In that regard, I should like to reassure everyone that Mexico will continue to act in that same spirit of responsibility and transparency in the face of a situation that poses a challenge not only for Mexico but for humankind as a whole. We will do so in order to build the necessary bridges and establish cooperation with each and every member of the international community to confront that challenge.

I also wish to point to the manner in which we have been working with the World Health Organization. That once again illustrates the importance of international multilateral institutions in ensuring well-being, peace and security throughout the world.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for the many and varied expressions of solidarity and support from many friendly countries. I should like to assure them that the Government and people of Mexico are deeply appreciative. We shall utilize that assistance in a responsible and efficient manner to benefit not only

Mexico but also, as I said earlier, the entire international community.

I am particularly pleased at the presence at this meeting of His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, on whom I now call.

The Secretary-General: I should like to thank you, Madam President, for your participation in, and organization of, today's important debate. You have shown great commitment to this issue, including as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Before I proceed with my remarks, I should like to say how relieved and encouraged I am by what you have just said with regard to the spread of swine flu. As this swine flu has spread to many parts of the world, including the United States, it has become another global challenge, which requires global coordination and support.

As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, I wish to inform all of you that all United Nations agencies are now mobilizing their resources to play a leading role, led by Dr. Margaret Chan of the World Health Organization (WHO). I have also expressed my position as the Secretary-General. We are now meeting with core groups under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General in close coordination with the World Health Organization.

Member States have the full support and full commitment of the United Nations and I sincerely hope that with full global participation and support we will be able to overcome and combat the swine flu, which is now a very important challenge for us. In addition to the global financial crisis, climate change, the energy crisis and the food crisis; we are now experiencing this very serious pandemic. It requires the cooperation of the entire international community and I count on the leadership and commitment of not only Council member States, but the whole international community.

Let me return to today's topic.

It is said that truth is the first casualty of war. When it comes to the youngest victims, what they lose first is their childhood. Fighting shatters more than infrastructure; it destroys the precious principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As bombs devastate schools, hospitals and families, children lose their right to education, health care and love. Far too many even lose their right to life.

I have witnessed scenes of unbearable suffering. Never have I been so outraged as when I recently spoke with girls who had been sexually victimized during the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Painful as it is to describe those atrocities, silence serves only to shield the perpetrators and perpetuate their crimes. The testimony of the victims — their dignity even after such appalling violations — made me more determined than ever to raise my voice to decry their suffering and to demand action.

Today's meeting again affirms that the plight of children caught in conflict zones is a threat to international peace and security. Since 1998, the Council has adopted six resolutions aimed at stopping the recruitment of child soldiers, the killing, maiming and rape of children, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals and obstacles to humanitarian access.

The Council has done more than adopt resolutions. It has established a working group on the topic, as well as a monitoring mechanism that reports to that group on grave violations against children in situations of concern. For my part, I have asked my Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to take those efforts even further.

Later in this meeting, you will hear from Grace Akallo, a former child soldier. If, after all she has endured, she can come before this Council as an advocate for peace, Council members must respond to her courage and resilience with action. With that in mind, I want to focus the rest of my remarks on what I believe the Council should do next. My appeal is also directed at parties to conflicts and the broader international community. My latest report on the question of children and armed conflict is now before you (S/2009/158). Its annexes name 56 parties, including States and non-State actors, which recruit child soldiers and commit other grave violations. Of these, 19 are persistent violators, who have been listed for more than four years.

I urge the Council to consider action to strike a blow against impunity and to stop those violators from continuing to victimize children. The protection framework needs to be strengthened. I recommend that the Council, at a minimum, expand the criteria for the annexes of my report to include parties that commit rape and other grave sexual violence against children in armed conflict.

Last year, the Council adopted a milestone resolution, Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), which focused specifically on sexual and gender-based violence. That was a crucial step. But it will have true meaning only when its provisions are translated into action. I urge the Council to expand the trigger of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to include sexual violence and, if possible, intentional killing and maiming of children. That is a crucial first step towards accountability for those terrible crimes.

We must also do everything possible to ensure that no matter how severely conflicts may rage, schools are always protected. We must support the efforts of our humanitarian partners to keep schools running in times of crisis and to safeguard the right to education. I call on all parties to conflicts to keep schools as safe zones for both boys and girls.

All countries and all groups must put the protection of children in situations of armed conflict above politics. I urge Member States to allow contact between the United Nations and non-State actors with a view to ensuring the protection of vulnerable children. We need to work with such parties in order to prepare action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children. We need to engage them so that they undertake specific commitments to address all grave violations committed against children.

I also urge all States that have not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to do so without delay. We have an impressive 193 parties to the Convention, but only 127 of them have ratified the Protocol. That instrument should be universal.

Donors also have a special role to play. The Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups advocate a comprehensive approach to reintegrating children into their communities. Donor contributions can make this happen.

I appeal strongly to parties to conflict to comply with international humanitarian law for the protection of children and all civilians. And finally, I stress the role of the Council in holding violators accountable. We must send a strong signal to the world that those committing appalling crimes against children in conflict situations will be brought to justice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement. I now give the floor to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Ms. Coomaraswamy: I thank the Council for convening this open debate of the Security Council on children and armed conflict. Madam President, your presence here today testifies to the commitment of the Council to this issue and the crucial leadership of Mexico as the new chair of the Security Council Working Group, following the exemplary leadership of France.

Before the Council is the eighth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158). I am glad to convey to Council members today that progress has been made, especially in addressing the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and I would like to start here with these positive and encouraging developments. Thanks to the continuing efforts of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, five action plans have been secured to date, in Côte d'Ivoire, Sri Lanka, the Sudan and Uganda, and four others are in the process of being finalized in the Philippines, the Central African Republic and Burundi. As a result, six parties have already been removed from the "list of shame". These developments demonstrate the power of the Council's focused attention and continuing engagement, and serves as a testament that it should continue to maintain pressure on violators to enter into a protection dialogue with the United Nations.

I am also encouraged that some Governments, including that of Myanmar, have recently approached my Office and their respective United Nations country teams to deepen their engagement with the recommendations of the Security Council Working Group. In Nepal, discussions are continuing and planning is under way for the release of 3,000 minors in Maoist cantonments. However, the recent crisis between the Maoists and the Nepalese Army may impede the progress hoped for. I strongly urge that the Government release the children as a matter of urgency. Just this morning, I was informed that the Justice and Equality Movement in the Sudan is in final discussions with the United Nations country team on finalizing an action plan.

This hope must be tempered, however, as the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158) continues to present a disturbing picture of grave violations committed against children around the globe. This year, the report identifies 20 situations of concern, where children remain vulnerable to abuse. The report chronicles 56 parties that continue to recruit and use children as child soldiers. A number of these groups simply refuse to enter into dialogue on action plans, while others, though willing to enter into dialogue, are prevented from doing so because the Member State concerned has prevented the United Nations from approaching non-State actors to devise action plans.

In this report, the Secretary-General has named 19 persistent violators who have been listed in the annexes for four years or more. The Council must now ensure that its words are not empty threats. Much depends on the Council taking measures against those who have repeatedly flouted its resolutions and who continue to recruit and use children. It is now crucial for the Council to move forward by beginning a discussion about the process by which targeted measures might be applied against repeat offenders.

In situations where sanctions committees already exist it is easier to envision such action. More systematic communications between the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant sanctions committees and expert groups is critical in this regard. In other cases where sanctions infrastructure does not exist, innovative solutions are necessary to ensure that violators are held accountable.

This open debate on children and armed conflict must be an occasion for the Council to reinforce its commitment to children and advance its protection agenda even further. The Council has already created powerful and unprecedented tools for enhancing the capabilities of child-protection actors on the ground, particularly as they deal with the issue of child soldiers. The decision of the Council to demand that annexes of the report of the Secretary-General contain lists of parties to conflict that recruit and use children and to consider possible targeted measures against them has led to thousands of children being identified and released. Armed actor after armed actor has told me that they are determined to be removed from the Secretary-General's annexes. This list of shame has been a rallying point for all those who want to increase the protection of children in conflict areas. In this sense, the power of the Council can make and has made a tangible difference in protecting children from being recruited and used by armed forces and groups.

However, these successes have also created an imbalance in the focus of the Council, especially with regard to all other grave violations. The moment is now ripe for the Council to extend its focus beyond child soldiers to deal more effectively with other violations. Not to do so threatens to silence the suffering of thousands of children who are subjected to unspeakable crimes. Ideally, the list of the Secretary-General should include all grave violations against children to ensure that the framework for protecting children in situations of armed conflict is comprehensive. However, since expectations do not always match realities, the United Nations and its partners have chosen to call upon the Council to take a gradualist path towards the expansion of the protection framework for children.

That is why the child-protection community is unanimously calling on the Council to begin, at a minimum, with expanding the listing criteria to include those who commit rape and other grave sexual violence against children, as a first step in this incremental approach. The inclusion of intentional killing and maiming of children in line with international humanitarian law would also be an important contribution to protecting children. That would be a critical step forward, recognizing that sexual violence and intentional killing and maiming are heinous crimes on a par with the recruitment and use of children.

In my travels to conflict affected areas around the globe I have had the chance to meet dozens of courageous and talented people who are working for the protection of conflict-affected children. These staff members come from funds, programmes and agencies like UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Labour Organization (ILO), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNIFEM and our non-governmental organization partners, reflecting the ever more mainstreamed nature of child protection throughout the United Nations system, as called for by the Security Council and our Secretary-General himself. I would like to thank UNICEF in particular for assisting me in my field visits.

I am pleased to see that the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations has just finalized its child protection policy, which I fully endorse and which, I am sure, my colleague Mr. Le Roy will elaborate upon. I cannot stress enough the centrality of United Nations peacekeeping and child-protection advisers to the monitoring and reporting mechanism that is called for in resolution 1612 (2005). That is why it is also critical for the Security Council to ensure that its investment in protecting children is more systematically reflected in country-specific resolutions, with the inclusion on a more consistent basis of child-protection provisions, including child-protection advisers, in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and political missions.

The Security Council and the General Assembly have repeatedly urged me to undertake field missions in order to monitor country situations, to be an independent moral voice for the sake of children and to advocate for their needs. My most recent trips have been to Gaza and southern Israel and to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Dungu, in the northeast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where I recently visited, 990 people have been killed and 300 children abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) since September 2008, and people are now just hiding in the bush to escape. In North Kivu, the rapid integration of Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP) and other armed groups into the Congolese Armed Forces has resulted in children being incorporated into the ranks of the national army. Although 1,300 have been released to child-protection partners, many more remain as child soldiers.

In South Kivu, impending Operation Kimia II, a joint military operation by the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), raises serious concerns about large-scale displacement, the use of children as soldiers and the possibility of exactions committed by uncontrolled armed units against civilian populations. With the United Nations taking part in offensive military operations, it is crucial that the Council follow those developments carefully in order to ensure that children are protected to the maximum extent possible.

In February, I visited Gaza and southern Israel after weeks of war. As it was just days after the fighting had ended, the children, their teachers and parents in Gaza were still in a state of shock and they had horror in their eyes. The children demand accountability, and the international community must respond. The crossings must be opened, and reconstruction must begin in haste. Everyone hopes for peace, and in southern Israel, where children also live in fear, girls and boys speak freely of reaching out to their Palestinian brothers and sisters.

In Sri Lanka, the situation remains deplorable for children in the north and the east. In the near future, I intend to send a special envoy to begin consultations with the Government. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam continue to recruit children to fight on the front lines, and they use force to keep many of the civilians, including children, in harm's way. The United Nations has urged the Government to practice military forbearance and to maintain a prolonged pause in the fighting, so that humanitarian workers can help negotiate safe passage for the remaining civilians. It is incumbent upon the Government to protect its citizens to the maximum extent possible and to refrain from using heavy artillery.

Humanitarian actors have urged that the internally displaced person camps set up by the Government meet international standards. We hope short-term military gain will not blind the authorities to the long-term demands of reconciliation. People stripped of their dignity are unlikely to forget, especially the children.

My field visits and the information contained in this report must be supplemented by the harrowing experience of children on the ground. Later this morning, you will hear from Grace, a former girl soldier, who will describe to the Council what she went through and what she and other children like her hope to receive from this body. While visiting North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I met a 12-year-old girl named Adila. She told me that she had joined the Mai Mai militia because her parents could no longer pay for school and because she thought carrying a gun would protect her from being raped. However, like thousands of other children in the Congo and despite her gun, Adila was sexually violated and abused by her commanders. In the camp she was always near starvation but had to fetch water, cook and clean in addition to her combatant activities.

Recently, Mai Mai groups have entered into the peace process, and Adila was identified and released by MONUC child protection. She is now in a non-governmental organization transit centre supported by UNICEF and has just gone back to school. Her eyes lit up when she told me that she plans to be a school teacher.

What am I to say to Adila, Grace and the hundreds of other girl and boy victims of sexual violence whom I meet on my missions to conflict-affected countries? Is it fair to say that those children suffer second-class violation and that the Council does not wish to apply the same focus and engagement to them? In my heart of hearts, I believe that that is not the intention of the international community and that this day will mark a new age in what my predecessor called the era of application.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Coomaraswamy for her briefing and for the work that she is carrying out on this very sensitive issue.

I now give the floor to Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

Mr. Le Roy (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to say to all present what an honour it is that they are participating with us in this important Security Council debate on our commitment to the vital topic of children in armed conflict.

In adopting resolution 1261 (1999), the Security Council formally recognized that the protection of children in armed conflict was crucial to peace and security. The Security Council thus included specific and very precise provisions on the protection of children in several mandates of peacekeeping operations and has consistently demanded that the protection of the rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict be taken into account in all peace processes and peace agreements as well as in post-conflict and reconstruction phases.

For the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the protection of children affected by armed conflict is therefore a fundamental element both of our strategy and of our daily commitment. For that reason, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has already put a large number of measures in place.

(*spoke in English*)

As a first step, DPKO established in-house capacity for child protection in the form of child protection advisers in 2001. The Council's sustained support for the role of child protection advisers in relevant peacekeeping operations has enabled us to deploy advisers to the eight most significant peacekeeping operations to date, with the most recent deployment, at the beginning of 2009, to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur mission and to the United Nations Mission of Assistance in Afghanistan. We have also built up a supporting capacity of child-protection expertise composed of both international and national staff. The latter, comprising over 40 per cent of the total staffing for child protection, serve as a key resource for our work due to their knowledge of local norms and communities. They also remain as an important national capacity when the United Nations and the peacekeeping operation ultimately wind up. This investment has yielded concrete outcomes and enhanced the mainstreaming of concern for children affected by conflict in our operation.

First, child protection advisers support heads of mission in integrating key child protection concerns into all stages of the peace process and the overall strategy of the peacekeeping operation, including, of course, negotiation with Governments, armed groups and parties to a conflict. In Burundi, for example, the release of former child combatants associated with the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu-Forces nationales de libération was placed at the heart of the negotiation as a priority item on the agenda of the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, resulting in the release of 340 such combatants in Burundi this month alone.

Verification efforts to identify children in assembly areas are ongoing. The significant developments are the result of concerted and sustained advocacy and the engagement of the facilitator, the Political Directorate and the United Nations system, including, of course, the United Nations Mission in Burundi and UNICEF, with the support of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Secondly, peacekeeping operations are now increasingly able to leverage their political resources and offer means to promote the protection of children

in armed conflict and to address violations of children's rights. Regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I have just clearly heard the legitimate concern expressed by the Secretary-General's Special Representative, but I can also say that significant progress on the release of children in North Kivu was registered after a lengthy peace process following an extensive and high-level sensitization campaign that targeted local communities, armed forces and armed groups on national and international standards prohibiting the use of children by armed groups and armed forces, implemented by MONUC jointly with UNICEF in June 2008. At the first point of contact with armed groups in the field, MONUC military units and military observers, deployed in remote and otherwise inaccessible areas, have contributed to the release of children by signalling the presence of children in armed groups and by providing information, security and critical logistic support for their release.

While there was a significant setback during the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and increased reports of re-recruitment of children during this period, MONUC and UNICEF have continued to tap into military resources in their work to secure the release of children from armed forces and from armed groups. Child protection focal points have been established in military contingents across various missions in places such as the Sudan, Haiti and Côte d'Ivoire. Mainstreaming child protection concerns in the activities of peacekeeping operations has been further enhanced through close cooperation between child protection staff and other mission components, particularly those concerned with human rights, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the rule of law and justice, security sector reform, gender, conduct and discipline — all the different units within our peacekeeping operations.

Thirdly, and most important, our peacekeeping operations have increasingly engaged in the implementation of important child protection priorities spelled out in the relevant Security Council resolutions. These include training all peacekeeping personnel on child protection and child rights, dialogue with parties to end the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups and the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms established under resolution 1612 (2005).

The training of peacekeeping personnel in child protection and child rights is a continuing priority for us and is now included as an integral part of the pre-deployment curriculum for civilians. Training material on child protection and child rights have been developed in various missions and have been used in induction training for all incoming force contingents and civilian components. The training is aimed at creating awareness of course, on the impact of armed conflict on children and knowledge of the international legal norms and standards that govern the protection and promotion of children's rights.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the Mission has partnered with Save the Children to implement a training-of-trainers programme for United Nations military and police representatives. That training equips them with information and tools to deliver training on child protection within their teams, thereby widening our reach through the military. The impact of in-mission training on the work of missions is bearing fruit and has promoted a child-conscious approach in the work of United Nations police and military. For example, in the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Haiti, training in child rights and child protection has now been fully integrated into the capacity-building activities provided by the United Nations police for national police units.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism is an important tool for holding perpetrators of violations of child rights accountable, in order to prevent further violation and to enhance the protection of children affected by armed conflict. As the Council knows, DPKO co-chairs the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting, along with UNICEF, in seven peacekeeping operations in the Sudan, Chad, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire.

Within the area of a mission, our child protection teams conduct systematic monitoring and reporting and support the preparation of specific reports in collaboration with UNICEF, United Nations country task forces and other units of the mission, especially those concerned with human rights.

Integrated with the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism is systematic follow-up to the conclusions and recommendations of the Security Council. In Côte d'Ivoire, following the de-listing of parties to conflict from the annexes to the

Secretary-General's reports, the mission has turned its attention to its tasks. In January this year, the mission received a programme of action from the Forces de défense et de sécurité des Forces nouvelles undertaking to combat sexual violence, as requested by the Security Council Working Group in its recent conclusions on Côte d'Ivoire.

(*spoke in French*)

In order to consolidate and further institutionalize our commitment to children in armed conflict within the framework of our missions, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has established a programme in all departments to make protecting children in armed conflicts a benchmark for all our operations. That policy has been formulated on the basis of broad consultations among our missions in the field; Headquarters, of course, here in New York; UNICEF; and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as many other key actors. We are also working to harmonize all elements of our protection activities, particularly within the framework of resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict; resolution 1820 (2008) on sexual violence against women; and resolution 1674 (2006).

Finally, I should like to assure members of the tireless commitment of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to supporting this issue in all our activities. My Department has committed itself to ensuring very close follow-up to the resolutions adopted by the Security Council so that we can continue to help to ensure that children have prospects for tangible and lasting peace. To that end, we are obviously continuing our close collaboration and full cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and the United Nations country teams. Of course, we are, as always, counting on the support of the Security Council to back us in this essential task.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Le Roy for his statement.

I shall now give the floor to Ms. Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ms. Veneman: I thank members for the opportunity to join them today as the Security Council discusses the situation of children affected by armed conflict. UNICEF appreciates the engagement and dedication of the Council to the matter of children affected by armed conflict and thanks the Secretary-General for his continuous and personal interest and commitment to this issue. Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, has been unrelenting and very effective in her work on behalf of children affected by armed conflict.

I should also like to express special appreciation for the leadership of the Government of Mexico on this issue. This collective engagement at the highest possible level is making a real difference in the lives of children by serving as a strong platform for advocacy and responses for boys and girls in conflict situations.

Millions of children around the world continue to be impacted by armed conflict. In fact, for many, conflict is all they know. Too often, children see their childhoods drift into turmoil, their family and friends killed and their lives, health and well-being put at risk. Sadly, that is the situation today for many children in Sri Lanka.

It comes as no surprise that under-five mortality rates are among the highest in conflict-affected countries. Children are not only the unintended victims of war; in some cases, they are directly targeted. The Secretary-General's reports produced by the monitoring and reporting mechanism established by the Security Council bear witness to that. Each of the incidents reported represents a personal tragedy. I have met boys and girls who have been brutally raped by soldiers and scarred for life — some having contracted HIV — and children who were recruited by armed groups and used as soldiers or sex slaves.

In places such as Afghanistan, schools have been attacked and teachers, and particularly girl students, have been targeted by horrendous acts. When I visited Gaza earlier this year, I saw schools damaged or destroyed and children suffering from the trauma of violence and the loss of loved ones. Sadly, as the report illustrates, disrespect for the sanctity of schools continues to be the situation in far too many countries.

Children remain the victims of the wars of adults, but there are also some glimmers of hope. Just a few weeks ago, 342 children in Burundi were released after a year of joint advocacy by child protection partners. Since January 2009, around 1,200 children in North

Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have been released by armed groups and forces.

Dialogue on children's issues with parties to conflict is an important element and has resulted in concrete commitments and action plans to prevent and end grave violations against children. The monitoring and reporting mechanism has become a key component of UNICEF's overall child protection strategy of enhancing the protective environment for children in situations of armed conflict. Monitoring and reporting are also important tools in triggering effective responses and prevention activities.

UNICEF's responses to children who are victims of grave violations include support for national child protection systems and survivors of sexual violence, along with rights training for armed forces personnel and the reintegration of children used by armed forces.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions and the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Just last December, UNICEF welcomed the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Around 40 per cent of all civilians killed or injured by cluster munitions are children. Next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and this year marks the tenth anniversary of the first Security Council resolution on children and armed conflict, namely, resolution 1261 (1999).

Those milestones have contributed to a stronger protection framework for children in armed conflict, and we must build on that momentum to do even more. UNICEF welcomes the eighth report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158), and we support its recommendations.

I note in particular the recommendation to expand the triggers to be listed in the annexes of the report to parties who commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children and, if possible, other grave violations, such as intentional killing and maiming. Such a development would be an important step forward, particularly to address sexual violence. It would also send a strong signal from the international community that perpetrators of grave violations, such as rape and sexual violence, must be held accountable for their crimes against children.

Although challenges lie ahead, progress has been made. UNICEF remains committed to working with and for children in armed conflict, including through continued efforts to monitor, report and respond to grave violations. Adherence to international humanitarian law and respect for children's rights must be strengthened, and those who commit violations against children must be held accountable.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Veneman for her statement.

I shall now give the floor to Ms. Grace Akallo, a former child soldier of Uganda.

Ms. Akallo: I thank the Council for inviting me to give a small voice to the many voiceless children in war. My name is Grace Akallo. I am from Uganda, and I was born in northern Uganda. I am here to talk not only about my own story but on behalf of all the children in armed conflict, who have to face and survive the atrocities of war, who suffer through the abuses of being used as child soldiers and through rape and sexual abuse. I am thankful that representatives are here at the highest level, and, to me, it means that you care, and that you are decision makers who want to show their commitment to stopping the suffering of children in wars.

Allow me to tell you my story. After elementary school, my parents sent me to St. Mary's College Aboke, a high school for girls in northern Uganda. I stayed in a dormitory with dozens of girls from far away. I was excited because only a few girls from my village went to high school. I had learned the advantages of education. I was determined to be the first person to go to university in my village.

Sadly, my dream of a great future was cut short when, in October 1996, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) stormed into my dorm and abducted 139 girls, including me. I was among the first five who were tied and pushed to move out. We were forced by the LRA soldiers to form four straight lines and were marched out into the woods. I knew at that moment that there was no surviving. My spirit died. My body was constantly wet with urine.

Sister Rachele, the Deputy Headmistress at the school, followed the rebels. She had no power. The rebels threatened to kill or rape her in front of us. She was asked to leave, but she refused to leave without her children. She stood her ground and, in the end, she was

released with 109 girls. I was not one of the lucky ones though, as I was among the 30 that were forced to remain.

After a month of wandering in the northern Uganda forest, we were divided into two groups to make it easier to control our march to southern Sudan. On the way, many children who could not walk were killed and their bodies abandoned in the forest. The rebels would use sticks, axes, bayonets or machetes.

When we arrived in Sudan, I and my friends were given AK-47s. We were taught to dismantle, clean and assemble the gun. My group was not taught to shoot or to fight. We were told hunger would actually teach us, and indeed it did. My friends and I were sent to battle against the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) several times. Hunger and thirst were the order of the day. During the long march back from battle against the SPLA, I fainted from thirst and hunger, and the LRA actually buried me in a shallow grave, thinking that I was dead.

In addition to being forced to fight, my friends and I were distributed to rebel commanders. We were forced to kill those girls who tried to escape or refused their husbands. I was repeatedly raped by the LRA commander on countless occasions. I was an innocent young girl. I had never known a man in my life until that day. I felt like a rock was being thrust into my skin. Yet I had to survive.

In April 1997, after seven months in captivity, I finally got a chance to escape from the rebels. The LRA was attacked by the rebels from southern Sudan, giving me the chance to run away. I walked for two weeks without food, surviving only on wild leaves, soil and dew in the morning. I was rescued by villagers from southern Sudan and handed back to the Ugandan Government soldiers who then handed me over to Sister Rachele. I was happy to be back, but my heart was saddened by the ongoing torture my friends were still going through. I left too many of them behind.

After a month at home, I went back to St. Mary's College Aboke and later graduated. I was lucky to reach the university level. But many of the girls who manage to escape are not able to return to school or have their dreams for the future because they are not helped to deal with their horrible experiences, or because they now have babies born during their captivity.

I have told my story, but the stories you have not heard are thousand-fold. There are dozens of armies and rebel groups that continue to recruit children in the same way around the world. I am here to remind you of the very real suffering of these children, who are hoping for you to act.

When I read the report in front of us (S/2009/158), I was amazed with the progress made in stopping girls and boys from being forcibly taken from their homes, beaten and forced to kill. Although child soldiers are still around, many have already been released. However, when I read further in the report, I saw little on a subject that means so much to me. What has been done for those boys and girls who are victims of rape? Sexual violence is a terrible crime and perpetrators must be punished. It must stop. I am saying this out of experience.

I was lucky enough to be able to escape and to be supported by people who cared for me, like Sister Rachele. But so many girls are still waiting for their chance to be rescued, and I think of them every day of my life.

I heard the Special Representative when she asked what she should say to victims of sexual violence like Adila and me. My answer is very simple: there is hope. There is hope because I too believe that this Council will act and succeed, as it has for child soldiers, for those thousands of children out there who are still waiting. I say this myself, because I am still waiting for some of my friends to return, and I hope that everyone here will be committed to bringing people like my friends back home.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Grace Akallo for her presence here today and her courage in coming to share her painful experience with us. I also wish to congratulate her for her strength and her will to move forward. I have no doubt that Ms. Akallo's testimony should demonstrate to us the urgency with which the international community should continue to act on this issue. Thank you very much, Grace. We all wish you the very best in the future.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to

deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): Before beginning my presentation I too would like personally to thank Grace Akallo for being with us today and sharing her touching story. I assure her that her moving words and her personal history will further guide us in our deliberations.

At the outset, allow me to thank the Security Council presidency, the delegation of Mexico, for organizing this open debate. Croatia welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) and commends the important work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and of the many non-governmental organizations working in the field. Their contribution is of tremendous importance, since it gives voice to the individual children who are or will become victims of these grave violations.

As a member of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Croatia has had the opportunity to witness the importance of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. The mechanism requires the Council to react to situations where recruitment and use of children take place. By listing in the annexes of his reports parties to armed conflict that recruit and use children, the Secretary-General gives the Security Council and its Working Group an opportunity to use a variety of tools in response to those violations.

However, this mechanism is triggered only if the recruitment and use of child soldiers occurs. In other words, if parties to a conflict commit one of the five grave violations against children other than the recruitment or use of children, they will not be listed in the report and the Security Council will not have the opportunity to act. In practice, that means that the Security Council will not request anything from those parties in a conflict area where children are being raped, where schools and hospitals are being attacked, where children are being deliberately killed or maimed and where the abduction of children is ongoing.

Croatia therefore welcomes the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the Security Council expand the criteria for the annexes of his reports to include parties that commit rape and other grave sexual violence against children in armed conflict, without prejudice to the possibility of further expanding the criteria in the future to include other violations.

An atmosphere of impunity and lack of accountability will allow perpetrators to continue hurting children in various ways. Without any real repercussions or the threat of targeted measures from the Security Council, perpetrators have no reason to stop their acts.

Croatia understands that all grave violations need equal attention in the Council. We would, however, like to emphasize that children in situations of armed conflict are particularly vulnerable, and that intentional acts of rape and sexual violence carry with them long-term repercussions both for the individual children and for the societies they live in. Croatia is appalled by the fact that children represent one third of those brutalized by rape. Croatia is also deeply concerned about UNESCO's finding that the number of attacks on schools, students and teachers increased sixfold between 2003 and 2006. These deliberate acts, together with many reported incidents involving the throwing of acid on girl's faces, aim to strip children of their education, leaving them even more vulnerable to future violations.

We are alarmed about the numerous incidents where humanitarian workers have been killed, abducted, beaten or threatened. Such acts, as well as the looting of aid convoys, deny children life-saving humanitarian assistance and must be stopped.

In order to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict, the Security Council can show its commitment through the possible adoption of a new resolution on children and armed conflict. This new resolution could give the Council an opportunity to expand the trigger of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to include rape and other grave sexual violence against children. It could also authorize relevant United Nations personnel to enter into a dialogue with armed forces and groups in order to verify the implementation of time-bound action plans and could request the Secretary-General to include information on the implementation of all requests made in the conclusions of the Security Council Working Group.

Moreover, Croatia believes that the Security Council should consider referring individual cases of grave violations against children in armed conflict to

the International Criminal Court, especially where national systems fail to address these cases.

Finally, allow me to express our gratitude to all stakeholders who have been working on the protection of children. Only by combining our efforts can we hope to reach the common goal of a world where children are neither victims nor targets in armed conflict.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the initiative of our Mexican colleagues to convene today's meeting of the Security Council on this very important item. We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/158). We wish too to thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, Mr. Le Roy and Ms. Veneman for the timely information they provided. We listened with close attention to the heart-rending statement made by Ms. Grace Akallo.

Russia endorses the Secretary-General's appeal to that proper attention be accorded to all grave violations of the rights of children in conflict. Crimes against children should not go unpunished. Here, we welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation that the criteria for the inclusion of parties to armed conflict in the annexes of his reports be expanded to include the killing or maiming of children.

We resolutely condemn intentional attacks on civilians, including children, and the deadly, indiscriminate or disproportionate use of force. One example of action of that kind was the August 2008 attack by the Georgian military against South Ossetia. The killing of civilians, including children, and the destruction of schools and hospitals have been recorded in reports of the Secretary-General.

Nor can we pass over in silence the grave violations of international humanitarian law during the military operations that Israel carried out in Gaza in January; these claimed the lives of hundreds of children and reduced schools — including a school operated by the United Nations — to rubble.

Once again, we call upon parties to conflict to abide by their obligations under international humanitarian law and to refrain from the use of force against the civilian population.

Children continue to fall victim to the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, where armed groups attack the peaceful population and engage in terrorist acts. It is important that Al-Qaida in Iraq has finally been included, alongside the Taliban, among the violators listed in annex I of the current report of the Secretary-General. Regrettably, children in those countries also lose their lives as a result of the actions of foreign forces, whose mission is to protect them. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has provided telling statistics in that regard. Despite repeated assurances about additional measures continuing to be taken to prevent such incidents, these occur with tragic regularity. This threatens the peace processes in those countries.

We consider that attempts to refer to civilian deaths as "collateral damage" are unacceptable and inconsistent with, inter alia, the provisions of the Geneva Conventions. We advocate the thorough investigation of such incidents and the punishment of those responsible.

We are pleased that monitoring and reporting mechanisms have been set up in all situations within the purview of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. It is now necessary to ensure that those mechanisms submit timely, objective, accurate and reliable information, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). We also favour the inclusion in peacekeeping operations of child protection advisers.

We take note of the work by United Nations country teams in urging parties to conflict to adopt plans of action to demobilize child soldiers and to end their recruitment. In that connection, we stress that contacts between the United Nations mechanism and non-State armed groups can be established only with the consent of the Governments of affected States. Moreover, although they are an important instrument for the protection of children, plans of action should not be ends in themselves. The genuine improvement of the situation of children on the ground is far more important to the assessment of progress than promises that are made on paper but often not fulfilled.

The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, chaired by France and then by Mexico, has done a great deal to elaborate recommendations on specific situations. The effective implementation of those recommendations will require the development of constructive cooperation with interested States.

The rehabilitation of child victims and their reintegration into society require concrete, long-term

steps, including the establishment of conditions to ensure their access to full education and health care. There is also a need to take steps to prevent crimes against minors. In that respect, in many conflict and post-conflict situations the decisive factor can be effective international support for national efforts to protect children's' rights.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): France fully endorses the statement to be made later today by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

At the outset, allow me to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico for her initiative to bring us together here today to address the issue of children and armed conflict. I also wish to thank Mr. Alain Le Roy, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund and the Secretary-General for their statements. I further thank Ms. Grace Akallo for her particularly moving testimony, which reminds us of the gravity of the crimes that we must end.

I also wish to pay tribute to the commitment of Mr. Claude Heller, Permanent Representative of Mexico, in assuming the duties of Chairman of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict with conviction and resolve.

Over the past four years ago, the Working Group has focused on the recruitment and use of child soldiers and has contributed to the release of tens of thousands of children. That was made possible by the unflagging efforts of all the members of the Security Council; the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy; UNICEF at the highest levels; and other actors in the field, particularly the non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Much remains to be done, however, as we are reminded each day by the tragic situation of children affected by conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sudan and Sri Lanka. We must respond. If the parties to a conflict do not implement action plans to free children despite repeated calls from the Security Council, we must not hesitate to impose tough, targeted sanctions. There is, unfortunately, no effective prevention or deterrent without sanctions. In this regard, I particularly welcome the actions taken by the International Criminal Court and the international criminal justice system, which have proven their ability to prosecute those who are guilty of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. Now more than ever, the fight against impunity must be a priority.

We do not put legitimate Governments and armed groups on the same footing, but they have the same responsibilities with respect to the Paris Principles. Children — all children — must be freed from the scourge of war. It is not just the protection and sometimes even the survival of children that are at stake, but the credibility of the Security Council and its resolutions.

France is convinced of the need for substantial progress with regard to the other five grave violations of children's rights that have been referred to the Security Council. We fully agree with the analysis and recommendations presented by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2009/158). The widespread nature of sexual crimes against children and the massive, systematic and planned nature of these crimes in certain situations call for decisive reaction. Children are too often killed or maimed during deliberate attacks, including terrorist attacks aimed at schoolchildren. We must do everything we can to halt these vile acts and to ensure that their perpetrators are held accountable before the courts. I welcome the adoption later today of a presidential statement that sends a strong signal to the parties in that regard.

> As Bernard Kouchner said here last year,
>
> "the time has come to reflect together on the possibility of permitting the Working Group to deal with the tragedy of sexual violence, independently of whether or not there are child soldiers in the country concerned" (*S/PV.5834, p. 23*).

Expanding the criteria for adding parties to the "list of infamies" to include sexual violence and intentional killing and maiming would represent an important first step. The Security Council will today commit itself to act within three months. We must ensure that this decision is followed up in deed, which would require, in particular, triggering the establishment of a reporting and monitoring mechanism.

Given France's experience at the head of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, I would like to share three proposals that we believe would make the Working Group more proactive, more transparent and more effective.

The Working Group's conclusions should be followed up more effectively, first, by the Working Group itself, which should make greater use of the information regularly provided to it by the Secretariat and by NGOs; then by the Security Council and its sanctions committees when examining situations on their agenda; and finally, in partnership with the donors to ensure in particular that the children released by armed groups and all other child victims of abuse receive appropriate care and are placed in reintegration programmes. Informal donor meetings could be organized to that end.

The Paris Conference review forum, "Free Children from War," inaugurated last September by the French Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Human Rights, could provide a framework for these meetings. The Mine Action Support Group's experience could provide a frame of reference in terms of methodology. France decided last year, at the first meeting of the forum, to make a special contribution of more than €1 million to UNICEF's reintegration and social rehabilitation programmes. We hope that other countries will be able to do the same, for instance at the next high-level meeting of the follow-up forum on the Paris Commitments that we will organize in the fall in the context of the coming session of the General Assembly here in New York.

The responsiveness of the Working Group could be improved. The Working Group has demonstrated its ability to adopt conclusions on all the reports that have been submitted to it. However, to date it has been unable able to find the resources to react formally to the sometimes troubling information that it may receive from the field between the submission of the Secretary-General's reports. We feel it to be crucial for the Working Group to react more quickly to emergencies, for instance by allowing the Chairman to react publicly on behalf of the Working Group.

The Working Group's work must be more transparent. The Group's formal meetings, based on the Council's formal meetings, would benefit from being held in public so that the many States concerned by the issue of children in armed conflict can be better informed and thereby in a position to participate in the international community's critical exertion of pressure on recalcitrant countries and groups. Using new information technologies, such as Internet broadcasting, could also be tried so that stakeholders in the field can also benefit from, contribute to and even participate in our debates.

If it is to implement these measures and achieve these objectives, the Secretariat must provide better support. The burden for this is currently falling solely on the Working Group's Chairman. We believe that increasing the Group's workload must lead to an allocation of sufficient resources.

At a time when there are believed to be 200,000 child soldiers in the world, the international community cannot turn its attention from this tragedy or waver in its efforts to demobilize and reintegrate them into society. In this regard, the guidelines of French policy remain unchanged. They are set out in the full text of my remarks, which will be distributed. We are translating those principles into action, as attested by the creation of two attaché positions specializing in the issue of children in armed conflict at our diplomatic missions in the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, each with its own budget and regional jurisdiction and working closely with the authorities of the countries concerned, United Nations partners, local and international non-governmental organizations and other donors. Consequently we were able to respond swiftly, in partnership with UNICEF, when about one hundred children were released in Burundi a few weeks ago. We are also able to implement programmes in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo that fully integrate best practices defined by the Paris Principles.

In conclusion, I wish to assure the Council of France's determined support for Mexico's efforts as chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Despite the complex procedure, despite the long period of development, we must remain animated by a sense of urgency. The fate of tens of thousands of children depends on that. They are counting on us to make concrete gestures. Grace Akallo has just told us of her hope and her confidence in us, in our ability to act. I am certain that we will hear her call and that we will all assume our full responsibilities.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, and Foreign Minister Espinosa for your leadership in hosting today's very important debate. I want to begin by also thanking the Foreign Minister for her very timely comments on Mexico's handling of the swine flu crisis. Here in the

United States our hearts are with the people of Mexico in this time of trial, and we very much applaud Mexico's efforts to confront and contain the crisis. My Government stands hand in hand with our friend and neighbour, Mexico, as we work together to deal with what is a shared challenge, one that is affecting both our countries and, indeed, many other parts of the world.

I also wish to welcome Mexico as the new chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and to thank France for its leadership as chair of that group over the last several years.

I also wish to thank Special Representative Coomaraswamy for her briefing and for her steadfast advocacy on behalf of the world's children. She continues to have our fullest support. I wish to say also how moved I know we all were by the testimony of young Grace Akallo, whose story and experience remind us of our obligations and of the importance of what we are discussing here today.

The United States is deeply committed to the welfare of children, and that includes protecting children from the scourge of war. Every day hundreds of thousands of children find themselves caught in the clutches of armed conflict, unprotected, exploited, abused, raped and terribly vulnerable. The Security Council and its Working Group have telegraphed strong political will to help those children and have helped shine the international spotlight on their suffering. Therefore the United States welcomes the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158). It includes valuable monitoring and reporting information that highlights both real progress and ongoing tragedies. It outlines thoughtful recommendations for future action.

Before turning to the rest of the report, allow me to comment on a few specific situations.

There is good news from Uganda. As the report notes, we have no evidence at present that the Uganda People's Defence Force has recruited child soldiers since August 2007. Uganda's strictly enforced laws and regulations now prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers. We commend the Government of Uganda for its efforts and for signing an action plan last December. We urge other Governments and non-State actors to follow Uganda's example by developing, signing and implementing action plans of their own.

However, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the situation remains dire. During the reporting period, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) documented 554 new cases of children recruited by armed groups, 26 of them girls. We are also deeply troubled by what the Secretary-General's report calls "widespread sexual violence" by armed groups in that country. In particular, two foreign armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic — the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda and the Lord's Resistance Army — continue to abduct children to serve as soldiers, porters and sex slaves, and some of those innocents have been murdered in cold blood.

We are also deeply concerned by the situation in Sri Lanka, where fighting between Government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has led to a growing, and grave, humanitarian crisis. Unconfirmed reports that the Government continues heavy shelling in the conflict zone, causing large numbers of civilian casualties, are alarming indeed. The LTTE has reportedly increased its forcible recruitment of children, and the Tigers are said to threaten families who seek to disclose information about their children to the United Nations. The LTTE also uses civilians as human shields, putting children at even greater risk.

Both the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE must abide by their commitments to prevent further loss of civilian life. We remain frustrated and concerned that the Government of Sri Lanka has not yet allowed a United Nations humanitarian team into the conflict zone to facilitate relief operations and the safe evacuation of civilians, including children.

We also continue to be deeply troubled by events in the Sudan, where close to five hundred children, some as young as 12, have been recruited since February 2008 by a range of armed groups, including Government forces. Moreover, attacks and restrictions on humanitarian workers have hindered the delivery of humanitarian aid to children. The recent expulsion by the Government of the Sudan of 13 international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has put the children of Darfur and the three areas at ever more grave risk. My Government is also extremely concerned by the 53 verified cases of child rape by armed Government elements in Darfur — something that I hope we can all agree is utterly unacceptable.

The situations in the Sudan, Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere remind us how much more remains to be done. One worthwhile step would be to expand the list of triggers for the monitoring and reporting mechanism authorized by Council resolution 1612 (2005) to include rape and sexual violence against children, as well as killing and maiming. As the Secretary-General's report shows, the rate of such crimes against children in combat zones has increased alarmingly. The United States fully supports such an expansion of these triggers. We applaud the Security Council for its coming endorsement of today's presidential statement pointing towards the same goal, and we look forward to the Council's further action on this matter.

Finally, the Secretary-General's report reminds us that some Governments and militias are repeat offenders — entities that persist in illegally recruiting and using child soldiers in defiance of the will of the international community. Where armies and militias that depend on children to fill their ranks do not change their ways, this Council has the authority and the responsibility to consider taking appropriate measures. The United States is determined to do its part. Our support for international organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross helps meet the needs of refugees, children and others whose lives have been uprooted by conflict, including the youngest victims of war. We are also working with our NGO partners to provide education and other programmes to meet the needs of children and adolescents in conflict zones and to give them hope for a better future.

The Security Council and the international community have made noteworthy progress together, but we must not stop now. We share the responsibility to protect all of the world's children and to provide them with a future of promise and opportunity, not one of war and abuse. We have heard the moving stories of such former child soldiers as young Grace, who was here today, Ishmael Beah and Emmanuel Jal. Let their escapes from terror and despair become the rule for children in armed conflict, not remarkable exceptions. Let their survival and success motivate us all and spur us to do more.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank the Ambassador of the United States for her words on the issue of the swine flu epidemic. I would also like to express my gratitude for her Government's cooperation, very open approach, close cooperation and support in jointly facing that common challenge.

Mr. La Yifan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to welcome you to New York, Madam President, to preside over this open debate on the issue of children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Deputy Secretary-General Migiro, Special Representative Coomaraswamy, Under-Secretary-General Le Roy and Executive Director Veneman of UNICEF for their briefings. I should also like to thank former victim and child soldier Grace Akallo for her moving statement.

The Security Council has defined six grave violations against children by parties to armed conflict: the recruitment and use of children in violation of international law, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals, and the denial of humanitarian access to children. All six violations against children should be accorded equal attention by the Security Council. We support the various endeavours of the United Nations, including the Security Council, to promote the protection of children in armed conflict. In that regard, I would like to stress the following points.

First, it is the common task of all the relevant organs of the United Nations to protect children in armed conflict and to ensure that they return to normal lives in the aftermath of conflict. Therefore, an integrated approach and a joint response are needed from the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant entities. As far as the Security Council is concerned, it should work from the perspective of conflict settlement to protect children from the harm of armed conflict by focusing on conflict prevention and the elimination of the root causes of armed conflict. In recent years, the escalation of tension in some conflict areas has subjected local children to severe hardship, whereas positive progress in peace processes in other areas has brought hope for the future of local children. That shows that the Security Council should concentrate more on conflicts themselves and focus its efforts on conflict prevention.

Secondly, in protecting children in armed conflict, it is necessary to respect the Governments of the countries concerned and encourage them to play a

major role. Resolution 1612 (2005) stresses that the Government of the country concerned bears the primary responsibility for protecting its own children. In carrying out their work in protecting children, parties concerned should cooperate fully with the Governments of the countries concerned in a joint effort to keep children from the harm of armed conflict. The Security Council and its Working Group should maintain frequent communication with the Governments of the countries concerned, acknowledge and support the positive measures they have adopted and continuously strengthen mutual trust with them.

Thirdly, the Security Council should continue to work to improve the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The monitoring and reporting mechanism has now been established in all the countries listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158). Since the main task of that mechanism is to collect information, it is necessary, in its operation, to enhance communication and cooperation with the Governments of the countries concerned. The Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has done a great deal of work since its inception, which is a source of satisfaction to us. We hope that the Working Group will strengthen cooperation with the Governments of the countries concerned, address the relevant issues through consultations and submit practical and viable recommendations to the Security Council. The Working Group is heavily burdened with a huge workload. We therefore hope that it will set clear priorities and improve its efficiency.

Efforts by the Security Council alone are far from sufficient to address the question of children and armed conflict. We welcome a more important role for regional organizations in dealing with this question. In addition, we encourage international institutions such as UNICEF and the World Bank to play a greater role in helping the countries concerned to prevent the involvement of children in armed conflict. We also welcome greater contributions from non-governmental organizations.

China is concerned about the long-term effect of armed conflict on children and deems it necessary to take long-term measures to help children affected by armed conflict to reintegrate into society and resume normal lives. In post-conflict reconstruction, the international community should make the return of children to homes, schools and society a priority and provide adequate financial guarantees for that purpose.

China attaches great importance to the protection of the rights and interests of children. Having ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, it has become a State party to the Protocol. We call on countries that have not yet done so to join and ratify the Protocol. It is our hope that, through our common efforts, the situation of children in armed conflict can be effectively improved and that all children can look towards a better tomorrow.

Mr. Shalgham (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our gratitude to you, Madam President, for being here today to preside personally over this important debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his briefing, as well as to commend Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their efforts to protect children, both in situations of armed conflict and elsewhere.

The report (S/2009/158) of the Secretary-General before us focuses on the progress made in the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) and its monitoring and reporting mechanism, as well as on the recruitment and use of children by parties to conflict in a number of countries. However, there is still much that the international community must do to implement that resolution.

We would like to emphasize that the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict are still taking place. Children are forced to participate in combat and the killing of people. They are often more subjected to abduction and sexual violence.

Libya expresses its concern and condemnation of the crimes committed against children involved in armed conflict. In that regard, we support the appeal of the Secretary-General to Member States to take stringent measures, within the framework of their national legislation and in accordance with international humanitarian law, to hold the perpetrators of those crimes accountable and to impose the harshest penalties in order to eliminate impunity. By the same token, Libya shares the view that the protection of children in armed conflict should be considered an

important facet of the strategy to prevent and resolve armed conflict.

Children continue to be the main victims of grave violations of human rights in conflicts throughout the world. The report of the Secretary-General bears sad testimony to that fact. My delegation shares the view of the Secretary-General that the detention of children in various conflict areas, based on their alleged association with armed groups, constitutes an express violation of human rights standards.

In particular, my delegation wishes to focus on the abuse, torture and coercive interrogation of Palestinian children in Israeli prisons. Here, we would like to strongly condemn the Israeli military operations that have recently led to the killing and displacement of thousands of Palestinian children, caused by the demolition of their homes and the killing of their families. In addition, thousands of children suffer daily while going to school because of the racist separation wall erected on Palestinian land and the hundreds of checkpoints that separate Palestinian villages. The unique nature, duration and extent of their suffering, as well as its continuation, constitute an established policy pursued by the occupier, and affect tens of thousands of children. These practices and policies should be prosecuted.

The actions undertaken by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in attempting to protect children and remove them from hotbeds of tension and conflict deserve our appreciation. However, my delegation appeals to the Working Group to avoid selectivity and double standards in the course of formulating its recommendations and its actions as those should not be politicized.

Given the regional dimension of some conflicts, my country appreciates the recommendation of the Secretary-General that United Nations country teams, political missions and peacekeeping missions allocate necessary resources to mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection concerns such as recruitment, release and reintegration of children.

The state of abject poverty and degradation of an area, the widening of an area of conflict, the absence of development, the inability to obtain basic services and lack of social and economic opportunity are all factors that increase the risk of child recruitment and underline the necessity of far-reaching development and recovery programmes aligned with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration guidelines and programmes. Such programmes must be based on the needs of local civil society with a view to achieving the successful and sustainable reintegration of former child soldiers into society.

Libya calls on international institutions and donors to help implement those programmes and hopes that the appeal launched by the Secretary-General will receive a positive response from the international community, including the World Bank and other influential actors. They must set aside long-term resources for use by United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, national organizations and civil society to promote child protection activities.

It must not be forgotten that the best way to protect children in armed conflict is to prevent the outbreak of such conflicts by addressing the motivations and root causes of conflicts.

Mr. Guillermet (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, allow me to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico for her presence among us today and for convening this important debate. My country highly values the work of the Mexican delegation in the presidency of the Security Council and Mexico's leadership of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We also thank Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, and Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for their presentations. In particular, my delegation thanks the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her presentation of the Secretary-General's annual report (S/2009/158) and for her recommendations for making the efforts of the Working Group more effective and efficient.

We have also heard the harrowing testimony of Grace Akallo. Her words should spur us on to work to protect girls and boys around the world.

The creation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism and the establishment of the Working Group have focused the attention of the Council and of the Organization in general on the plight of children in situations of armed conflict, an issue that has become prominent in our discussions and concrete analysis of specific situations.

The use of new tools has already brought very positive progress to the fight against the recruitment of children. Throughout the world, parties to conflicts have reached agreements to halt the recruitment of children and secured the demobilization and reintegration of child recruits subject to abuses and violations of their rights. Nevertheless and in spite of those achievements, we still face major challenges in addressing the issues that affect children in conflicts.

The limited number of situations where plans of action have been implemented, according to the report of the Secretary-General, is a major concern for Costa Rica, as is the limited scope of the existing mechanisms that deal mainly with the recruitment of children and relegate other grave violations to secondary consideration. We firmly affirm that the lack of systematic follow-up of the recommendations of the Working Group has limited the potential scope and efficiency of the Working Group.

Costa Rica believes that now is the ideal moment to take stock of the Group's work and to review, update and strengthen the framework established in Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), particularly in the following areas.

First, the number of violations that may trigger the monitoring and reporting mechanism must be expanded. On that issue, my delegation considers that all six grave violations established in resolution 1612 (2005) are equally grave and we believe that they must all receive due and balanced consideration on the part of the Working Group. Costa Rica does not believe it appropriate to establish artificial hierarchies, as has been done up to now, subordinating the triggering of the monitoring and reporting mechanism only to the recruitment of children. In our opinion, such narrow and outdated criteria put other violations in the background when there is an absence of recruitment, and they become neglected.

Costa Rica would support the implementation of a progressive approach that would trigger the monitoring and reporting mechanism on the basis of two additional grave violations: the killing and maiming of children and sexual violence. It is clear that to ensure the viability of this approach it is necessary, on the basis of international law, to clearly define the limits of each grave violation, set forth jurisdiction and identify the most effective response by the various United Nations organs. My delegation welcomes the Council's intention to take action in response to this concern within the next three months.

The second area of importance for Costa Rica is that of the action plans. For us, it appears necessary to carefully review the factors that have limited their application until now. It is also necessary to determine how timely and appropriate it is to use this tool to respond to other grave violations.

My country considers that these plans must include a component for dealing in a comprehensive and sustained way with victims of violations, including access to basic services in key areas such as education and health, with a gender-sensitive approach and special attention to particularly vulnerable groups such as children with disabilities. This response calls for the imperative participation of various United Nations agencies and is key in preventing other violations.

Thirdly, my delegation considers it indispensable to follow up more systematically on the recommendations of the Working Group, which must serve as true indicators of progress in successive assessments of each situation. This follow-up of the Working Group's recommendations should also be accompanied by measures and sanctions, as other delegations have affirmed this morning, to make them effective when necessary. In this respect, we agree with the report's recommendation that cases be referred to the Security Council sanctions committees as a means of deterrence. Moreover, we believe that the use of complementary mechanisms to support national judiciary institutions, such as the International Criminal Court can also be a valuable tool in the fight against impunity.

Finally, we deem it necessary that each report include an assessment of the progress or deterioration of each specific situation. These assessments would bring a measure of accountability, both to those who commit grave violations against children and to those of us who are responsible for making the perpetrators accountable. We encourage the Office of the Special Representative to ensure that its reports go beyond the compilation of statistical information and help to identify with greater clarity trends and patterns of violations, as well as to promote a strategic vision to find solutions to each one of them.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I would like to express my deep appreciation for Mexico's leadership in organizing this important debate. Our appreciation

goes also to the former and current Chairs of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Ambassador Ripert of France and you yourself, Mr. President, for bringing this issue to the forefront of the international agenda. Japan is committed to extending its utmost support to the valuable work of the Working Group.

I would also like to express gratitude to the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, Special Representative, Coomaraswamy, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the UNICEF Executive Director for their presence here this morning and for their vital contributions to the protection of children. We particularly thank Ms. Grace Akallo for sharing with us her painful but inspiring life experience and her advocacy activities.

In recent years, we witnessed a marked improvement in the condition of children in some countries, as several conflicts have come to an end. We are encouraged that noticeable progress has been made through action plans to release child soldiers in several countries, including Burundi, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda.

At the same time, many other parties to conflict have still not implemented action plans. Indeed, 19 parties have been listed for the past four consecutive years in the annexes to the reports of the Secretary-General on this subject. Japan is deeply concerned about those vulnerable children, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where the situation is still serious, and also in places such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Darfur, Somalia and Sri Lanka.

We appreciate the contribution of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, but its work is not complete when it reaches conclusions. In the coming weeks, it should focus more on following up on and implementing its conclusions effectively. The Security Council should mobilize all means available to us to combat violations against children and send a strong political signal, including peacekeeping operations, special political missions, integrated offices, the Peacebuilding Commission, and the sanctions committees.

The Security Council should also respond to other grave violations against children in armed conflict, such as sexual violence. Systematic rape as a tactic of war is impermissible. The Council should react firmly and forcefully against any sexual violence in conflict. It should strengthen monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Japan supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to include parties that commit rape and other grave sexual violence against children in the annexes of his reports in the future. We believe that expansion of the criteria could enhance the capacity of agencies on the ground, such as UNICEF, to carry out monitoring and reporting.

Another serious threat posed to many children comes from landmines, unexploded ordnance and cluster munitions. Some 5,500 people were killed or maimed by landmines and unexploded ordnance in 2007, and children account for more than one third of all victims. We welcome the steady progress of the Ottawa Convention, which has now marked the tenth anniversary of its entry into force. The recent signing conference for the Convention on Cluster Munitions was also welcome.

It is imperative to prevent the deaths of innocent civilians and children and to provide support to victims. For this reason, we have contributed more than $300 million, including for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, the Sudan, Afghanistan and Lebanon. We will continue to make similar contributions.

Small arms and light weapons have the most serious impact on the situation of child soldiers and on violence against children, including recruitment and abuse. Since small arms and light weapons frequently circulate through illicit trade, we should encourage every country to strengthen its implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. Japan has been actively supporting projects related to the control of small arms in conflict, such as the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) in Afghanistan and the Small Arms Control Programme of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

However, a more fundamental solution would be to restrict the export of weapons to countries engaged in armed conflict or where armed conflict is likely to arise. Japan's long-standing policy of prohibiting the export of weapons imposes strict criteria for the transfer of arms to any country. Based on this policy, we support the establishment of a common

international standard in order to ensure the responsible transfer of conventional arms, and we actively participate in relevant discussions within the United Nations on this issue.

In conclusion, in many conflict situations, children are the most vulnerable. Japan is a strong advocate of the concept of human security. We are very proud that, together with Mexico, we are promoting the Friends of Human Security at the United Nations. We work with interested partners to achieve the goals of protecting and empowering vulnerable people on a regional and local level, including through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. By preventing and alleviating the deleterious impacts of conflict, we endeavour to enable children around the world to have a brighter future.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): Madame President, I would first like to thank you for your presence here today and for your personal commitment to the issues that we are dealing with. I should also like to express my sympathy and solidarity in regard to the epidemic that your country is currently experiencing, an epidemic that has, in the meantime, spread to other countries, including to European countries such as my own.

We are grateful to you, Madame President, for the determination that you have shown in this matter today, and you can certainly count on our full cooperation in this issue. I would like to thank Mexico and the Permanent Representative of Mexico here in New York for the excellent work that has been done in the preparation of this meeting and in the Working Group that deals with this matter.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be made by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

We are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Coomaraswamy, Executive Director Veneman and Under-Secretary-General Le Roy for their statements. In particular, as others have, we also welcome the presence of Ms. Grace Akallo and thank her for her thought-provoking and moving remarks. It is very important to us that the Council listen to the voices of the victims of the very crimes that we strive to prevent. I can assure Ms. Akallo that we will learn from her thoughts and experiences and that they will carry us forward in our work.

The new report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) provides an excellent overview and assessment of the developments that have taken place since late 2007. We appreciate the ongoing implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in new country situations. The signing of two additional formal action plans and the de-listing of one party are welcome developments.

Nevertheless, the Secretary-General's report makes it very clear that less than 10 per cent of all parties listed in the annexes have entered into formal action plans. The vast majority of those parties are non-State actors. We agree with the Secretary-General that direct contact between the United Nations country teams and non-State actors is of great importance to ensure the effective protection of children and we call on the concerned Member States to allow such contact in the framework of resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005).

According to the report, 19 parties to conflicts have been listed in the annexes for the past four years. We believe that, for the sake of the children, the Council must ensure respect for its resolutions and should make better use of the tools available to it. More systematic communication needs to be established between the Security Council Working Group and the relevant sanctions committees. We welcome the fact that this idea is reflected in the draft presidential statement that will be adopted at the end of this debate. We also wish to encourage Member States to provide sanctions committees with additional information with a view to listing individuals or entities committing violations and abuses against children.

More has to be done, too, to end impunity and to bring to justice individuals who commit crimes against children. Concerned Member States must take decisive action to strengthen the rule of law and must ensure that those responsible are brought to justice either through national justice systems or international justice mechanisms. The International Criminal Court — and I wish to stress this point — can play an important role in ending impunity in this area also.

Furthermore, it is important to ensure that provisions for the protection of children continue to be included in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions. The protection of children must also be systematically

considered in peace agreements. We recognize the important work done by child protection advisers and welcome their increasing deployment over the past few years. Austria was honoured to support the ongoing efforts within the United Nations system to develop guidance for mainstreaming the protection of children within United Nations peacekeeping by hosting a child protection workshop organized by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the European University Center for Peace Studies of Stadtschlaining, Austria, in March 2009. The workshop brought together — for the first time, as far as I know — child protection advisers from all United Nations peace operations and peacebuilding support offices.

We particularly welcome the special focus in the Secretary-General's report on the issue of rape and sexual violence against children. They are horrendous crimes that have far-reaching implications for the development of the affected societies. Unlike the other six grave violations, those crimes have no obvious link to warfare, and yet sexual and gender-based violence against children has reached appalling levels in many situations of conflict.

It will be difficult to ensure the effectiveness and credibility of our work if the recruitment and use of child soldiers remain the only gateway to listing parties to armed conflict in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports. We therefore support the Secretary-General's recommendation to add the crime of rape and grave sexual violence as an additional element to trigger the monitoring and reporting mechanism. We are also open to including the crime of killing and maiming of children in violation of applicable international law.

Also, we welcome and encourage the ongoing efforts within the United Nations to devise a strategy to improve data collection and reporting on sexual violence. We must ensure an effective response to these violations. We also believe that the special situation of children with disabilities should be given thought. We fully support the view that resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1820 (2008) should be mutually reinforcing and that complementary processes for the documentation of and/or reporting on those resolutions should be explored. The participation of the United Nations Development Fund for Women and other relevant actors in United Nations country task forces is a positive step.

It is significant that we have achieved some progress, important progress, during the negotiations in the past days, but we regret that the Council was not yet ready to take action on these pressing concerns. We have noted that the members of the Security Council are prepared to and will continue their considerations on this very important matter. You can rest assured, Madame President, that Austria remains committed to a more effective and efficient framework for the protection of children. We will continue to work with others in order to allow for a more balanced and credible response to the very real issues that children are confronted with on the ground.

Mr. Tiendrébéogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you personally, Madame President, and the Mexican delegation — the new Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict — for having organized this open debate on such an important issue as the protection of children in armed conflict.

We note the presence this morning of the Secretary-General and thank him for his important remarks. We convey our gratitude to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for the presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) and her personal commitment to this cause. We also thank Ms. Veneman, Mr. Le Roy for their statements, and we thank Ms. Akallo in particular for having conveyed to us how difficult it is to be a child soldier and for her vivid plea, which I am sure the Council will have noted.

Although notable progress can be seen in the protection of children in areas of armed conflict, the situation remains troubling. As the news shows us, the violation of children's rights continues in different forms, all equally serious, regardless of existing standards on the issue. Recruitment and use of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence, murder and mutilation, attacks on schools and hospitals, abductions and the impeding of humanitarian access are part of their daily lot.

The recruitment and use of children by both State and non-State actors continue in violation of resolution 1612 (2005) and of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In some regions, their scale, in particular the cross-border

recruitment of child soldiers, including in camps for internally displaced persons and refugees, is especially alarming.

With regard to sexual violence, it is traumatic and has destructive psychological effects both on victims and on their communities. Unfortunately, socio-cultural inertia is still an obstacle to their elimination, to prosecution of their perpetrators and, above all, to adequate legal, medical and psychological care for the victims.

Systematical and deliberate attacks against pupils, teachers and schools are equally unacceptable. Even in times of conflict, education must continue, and the parties must shoulder their responsibilities in that regard, in accordance with international law.

We are also particularly concerned by the obstacles to humanitarian access. It is essential that the Council ensure strict compliance with international humanitarian law, all the more because the current nature of conflicts makes civilians, including children, who are the most vulnerable group, the main victims of combat.

Protecting children in armed conflict is a shared and multifaceted responsibility requiring concerted, coordinated and renewed effort. We urge the Security Council to take the necessary deterrent measures against those who violate children's rights in situations of armed conflict by adopting a comprehensive strategy for preventing conflicts and adequately protecting all children.

There is also a need to end the impunity prevailing at the national level. That is why my delegation also advocates genuine independence on the part of judicial systems.

The implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism has produced encouraging results. Given the damaging effects of other grave violations, the mechanism should be extended. Until a new relevant resolution is adopted, resolution 1612 (2005) should continue to be a guidepost for our actions.

The formulation of action plans by a number of State and non-State actors to put an end to all recruitment of child soldiers has also proved useful. Therefore, my delegation urges all parties, in particular those listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report, to draft clear action plans containing precise deadlines.

We welcome the initiative to ensure the presence of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations and political missions. Once again, we urge the Council to provide a concise and precise child protection mandate to peacekeeping operations.

Peace agreements; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; and reconstruction activities should incorporate the protection of children, including girl combatants or girls associated with armed groups; the development of basic social services for them; and professional training for former child soldiers.

My delegation congratulates the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict on its leadership. We urge it to improve its working methods and decision-making procedures. We also believe that the current increase in its workload should receive appropriate administrative support. Furthermore, the Council should develop a system for regular follow-up on the Working Group's conclusions and recommendations. The establishment of more fruitful cooperation between the Working Group and the geographical sanctions committees should also be incorporated into that process.

The primary responsibility for protecting populations in conflict areas lies with the parties. We urge them to fully shoulder that responsibility, in particular with regard to vulnerable groups such as children.

In conclusion, we should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and her team, as well as UNICEF, for their leadership on issues related to children and armed conflict. We are also grateful to other United Nations institutions and to the entire humanitarian community for their commitment to and multifaceted support for this particularly vulnerable sector of the civilian population.

Finally, we wish to thank the Mexican delegation for the draft presidential statement, which my delegation supports.

Mr. Bui The Giang (Viet Nam): Let me join other speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on a very important topic. I also wish to thank France for its successful chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and

Armed Conflict and congratulate Mexico on its assumption of the chairmanship of that key body of the Security Council earlier this year. I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/158) and his briefing. In addition, I am grateful to Special Representative Coomaraswamy, Under-Secretary-General Le Roy and UNICEF Executive Director Veneman for their briefings.

My delegation is pleased to learn from both United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations on the ground that tangible progress has been made in certain places in the world in the protection of children in armed conflict. The success in setting up monitoring and reporting mechanisms on grave violations of children's rights and in developing and implementing action plans, as well as other kinds of concrete commitments related to situations of armed conflict, is equally heartening.

In that connection, we commend the dedicated and effective efforts of all related institutional and individual actors, without whom such progress and success would be impossible. We especially appreciate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and her team for their work in this challenging field, including their country visits, which have considerably helped to facilitate the collaboration between the United Nations and relevant partners in implementing resolution 1612 (2005).

However, my delegation is deeply concerned about the fact that, with armed conflicts escalating in many parts of the world, children continue to fall victim to killing, maiming and all other sorts of violence, including, in particular, sexual violence, recruitment and attacks targeting schools and hospitals. We reiterate our consistent position that, in situations of conflict, all parties concerned are obliged to comply with international human rights and humanitarian law. We therefore condemn all such acts of violence and abuse against children and call on the United Nations system and the rest of the international community to make greater efforts for the sake of children caught in armed conflicts.

We support the Secretary-General's recommendation that the child protection mandate of all relevant United Nations peacekeeping and political missions be further enhanced, including by formulating specific provisions for the protection of children and deploying child protection advisers. We endorse the idea of establishing appropriate strategies and coordination mechanisms among relevant Member States, United Nations peacekeeping and political missions and United Nations country teams for information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection concerns.

Given the long-term adverse impact of armed conflicts and related violations and abuses against children, it is our view that the Security Council should pay equal attention to all grave violations and address them accordingly. At the same time, if disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes for children are to be effective and sustainable, timely and adequate human, material and financial support is essential.

Moreover, all necessary measures to be taken in that connection should be undertaken within the framework of a broader strategy of conflict prevention and response that deals with, inter alia, the root causes of armed conflict — hunger and poverty — and covers social, economic and development issues during and after conflicts. Such a strategy can and should involve and be assisted by the United Nations, particularly through close collaboration among United Nations bodies, including peacekeeping and political missions, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and other specialized agencies.

Finally, let me emphasize the importance of education as an important means of preventing armed conflict and of addressing violations against children in conflict areas. The public — including, first and foremost, children themselves — needs to be equipped with knowledge about children's rights and ways to ensure their implementation, so that it will be willing to report cases of violations and participate in fighting them.

With that in mind, we support activities to raise public awareness about children's rights and to disseminate best practices in the protection of children in conflict areas. We strongly believe that United Nations agencies, particularly UNICEF, and other international organizations can be of great help in that regard. We also encourage civil society organizations to energetically engage in and constructively contribute to such endeavours.

Mr. Mugoya (Uganda): We thank the Foreign Minister of Mexico for coming to New York to preside over this important meeting. We welcome the

Secretary-General's comprehensive report (S/2009/158), which covers compliance and progress towards ending the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and other grave violations. We also welcome the presence of the Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Migiro, in our midst. We thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Le Roy, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their briefings. My delegation is grateful to Ms. Grace Akallo, who was with us this morning and who has shared her experience, as a former abducted child, on the plight of children in armed conflict.

My delegation is pleased to note that the preparation of the report involved broad consultations with all key stakeholders, especially the country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting. We are convinced that focus on this participatory approach will yield better results in ensuring more effective protection for children affected by conflict in situations of concern.

Uganda is fully committed to and supports the various efforts by the United Nations, including those of the Security Council, to promote the protection of children in armed conflict. My delegation condemns the continuing recruitment, use and abuse of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law.

The negative psychosocial consequences on the mental health of the affected children cannot be overemphasized. While we acknowledge that there has been significant progress as indicated in the report, we are deeply concerned at the slow pace of implementation. We have noted, for instance, that out of the total of 56 parties listed and those not listed in annex I and II of the Secretary-General's report, only four parties had signed action plans, one had signed an action plan that did not meet the required minimum standards, and there were three or four cases of ongoing dialogue to translate commitment into action plans.

Those statistics clearly demonstrate that quite a lot of work remains to be done. We therefore call upon Member States, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, country-level task forces, United Nations peacekeeping and political missions and non-governmental organizations to redouble their efforts.

The Government of Uganda signed and implemented an action plan regarding children associated with armed forces and continues to allow regular access to the United Nations to any Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) facilities upon request to monitor compliance. The report of the Secretary-General clearly attests to this by pointing out that there were no cases of recruitment and use of children by the UPDF or the now-disbanded local defence units, and that the UPDF has accordingly been de-listed.

Uganda continues to be vigilant in the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), and tremendous progress has been made, resulting in the release of many formerly abducted children and their reintegration into their families and communities. The most recent example of this commitment was the rescue, reintegration and ongoing rehabilitation of Catherine Ajok, the last of the 139 Aboke girls who were abducted by the terrorist Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), including Ms. Akallo, who was here this morning.

As we have heard from the testimony of Ms. Akollo, one of the most disturbing issues considered in the report, which is unfortunately common in most armed conflict situations, concerns sexual and gender-based violence, with young girls as the largest and most vulnerable group of victims. Uganda strongly supports the recommendations by the Secretary-General and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict that the Security Council should consider, at a minimum, including rape and other acts of grave sexual violence as additional criteria for inclusion in the annexes.

My delegation also expresses concern at the increase in the reported cases of indiscriminate killings of children caught in situations of armed conflict and war as well as attacks on schools. We condemn these inhuman acts and call upon the perpetrators to desist from carrying out such gross atrocities. We also call upon the international community to take decisive action against all those committing crimes and violations against children, including the LRA.

Finally, my delegation calls upon the parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child to strengthen measures geared towards preventing the recruitment of

children into armed forces. We welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation concerning effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes as vital for the well-being of children associated with armed forces and groups. It is therefore imperative that the respective Governments and donors ensure that such programmes, including the provision of social services and amenities, be community-based and receive adequate and timely resources and funding for their long-term sustainability. We agree with the observation that this is an increasingly crucial factor for durable peace and security.

We are grateful to the delegation of Mexico for preparing the draft presidential statement, which my delegation fully supports.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): Allow me to welcome the presence of Her Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico in the Security Council this morning. We very much appreciate her gesture and desire to attend and preside over this important meeting. It underlines the importance Mexico attaches to this issue. Allow me to also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for all her efforts to protect children against every form of cruelty and violence. Furthermore, I congratulate Mexico for assuming the chairmanship of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and wish it every success. Last but not least, I must express our deep appreciation for the extensive work covered by the Working Group during the chairmanship of France.

Children are our future. We must protect them from every danger, at all costs. Yet countless children all over the world suffer every day from the most horrible kinds of treatment, being forced to fight as soldiers and being subjected to unspeakable forms of abuse and violence. Listening to Grace Akallo and hearing her moving story, we have been reminded once again of the grave nature of the issue we are dealing with today. We fully see once again how important it is to work unrelentingly against the use of children in armed conflict and how imperative it is for the Council to fully assume its responsibilities in this regard. In this context, the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158) provides us with a very useful basis to work from. We fully agree with his observations. We also support his recommendations.

The loss of the lives of children in armed conflict not only is a tragedy of the first degree, but also deprives nations of their future. In addition, minors who are raped or must face grave sexual violence are physically and mentally wounded forever. We must protect and save our young and future generations from such an intolerable shame and burden. The cultural values of humanity throughout the world require the protection of children. No one should feel they can trample this cardinal right and principle. We have zero tolerance for the abuse of children under any pretext.

A number of criteria and issues were elaborated during the deliberations of the Working Group. I need not go into the details. However, we believe that the following points should be borne in mind. There are wide and justified expectations of the work of the Security Council on all issues and problems related to children. We all have to encourage and urge States to continue to cooperate with the Working Group. And we have to expedite and facilitate the work of our Group by considering reports in a timely manner.

Turkey is party to each and every United Nations instrument related to the rights of children. Of course, these United Nations instruments have become very much an integral part of our national legislation. We also support initiatives, and are party to various initiatives, outside the framework of the United Nations promoting the rights of children.

We should do everything possible to hold accountable before justice the violators of children's rights. There should be no impunity for the criminals and violators if we are to put an end to these horrific crimes. There is still a long way ahead of us in achieving that objective. We must remain committed and must not refrain from taking the necessary steps, as appropriate. Turkey is resolved to be an active partner in this honourable journey.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): I would like to start, Madam Minister, by welcoming you to the Council today. We are delighted that you are able to preside over this important meeting. I would like also to thank the Mexican delegation, and in particular Ambassador Heller, for the excellent Mexican leadership of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

We associate ourselves fully with the statement to be delivered later by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

We welcomed the opportunity this morning to hear from the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, and from representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and of UNICEF. We were also struck by the powerful personal testimony of Ms. Grace Akallo.

I would like to pay tribute to the outstanding work that the United Nations agencies and funds continue to undertake in the cause of children affected by armed conflict. I would like to focus particularly on the untiring work of the Special Representative and her team and to recognize the pivotal role of non-governmental organizations and civil society groups in the field. That this strand of Security Council work achieves such impact on the ground is testament to their dedication and to Ms. Coomaraswamy's leadership.

When the Security Council established its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, it did so with a clear sense that the new structure would need to be able to adapt to changing realities. It is now time to address some of the wider challenges of the child protection agenda and some of the inefficiencies of the original model. We have said repeatedly that the Working Group does not make use of all the tools available to it in support of child prbtection. That needs to change in two ways.

First, we strongly believe that it is time for the Council to expand the criteria for listing parties that commit abuses against children. That should be matched by measures to enhance the effectiveness of the Working Group. In particular, we should expand the monitoring and reporting mechanism's trigger to include both acts of rape and other forms of sexual violence and acts of killing and maiming that are committed against children. That would be consistent with the Secretary-General's recommendations and would address the deeply worrying patterns that are set out in his reports.

Secondly, it is vital that we improve the monitoring of the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations. We need better feedback on what works and what does not. The Secretary-General's reports to the Working Group should include concrete information on progress made by listed parties. That may require some additional administrative support from the Secretariat, but the impact would be significant.

I would like to turn briefly to several conflict situations where we have particular concerns about the impact on children. My Foreign Secretary, David Miliband, is today visiting Sri Lanka with his French counterpart, Bernard Kouchner. Tens of thousands of civilians, including many children, are at extreme risk as a result of the conflict and the dire humanitarian situation there. The Security Council has made clear its support for the efforts of the United Nations, led by the Secretary-General. We continue to urge all parties to respect international humanitarian law and to take the necessary steps to ensure the safe evacuation and protection of and assistance to the civilian population, and especially the children, caught up in that conflict.

I would like also to highlight our concern about forced labour in the military in Burma. Personnel responsible for underage recruitment have been identified. Bringing them to account would demonstrate the commitment of the Burmese Government to cooperate with the United Nations.

In Nepal, we hope to see the Government implement its commitment to Ms. Coomaraswamy to release minors remaining in the cantonments.

I note that Al-Qaida is a new addition to the annexes of the Secretary-General's report for their use, and their wilful killing and maiming, of children in Iraq. The measures contained in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) should be brought to bear in preventing such crimes.

Today's debate is another step forward in the Security Council's work on these important issues. The international community must be prepared to take action against those individuals and groups that commit egregious abuses against children and that refuse to undertake the remedial action demanded of them. We look to the Working Group to lead such action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now set aside my functions as President of the Security Council and make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Mexico.

On behalf of Mexico, I thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her introduction of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158).

It is clear that, in spite of the progress that has been made, children continue to be direct and

defenceless victims of armed conflicts, and that we must intensify our efforts to change that situation. Mexico upholds the principle of the best interests of the child and considers that the international community must redouble its efforts to provide broad and effective protection to children affected by armed conflict.

The Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has worked hard, initially under French and now under Mexican leadership, to ensure that all parties involved in a dispute respect the rights that are unambiguously guaranteed under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

We condemn all acts that jeopardize the integrity of children, such as attacks against schools; the recruitment or use of child soldiers; rape and other sexual violence, which affects girls in particular; abduction; denial of humanitarian access; maiming; and, of course, killing.

For us, it is clear that violations of the norms of international humanitarian law are international crimes. We therefore consider that the work of the International Criminal Court in the case against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, who is accused of conscripting and enlisting children under the age of 15 and using them in hostilities, underlines the importance of fighting impunity for those who violate the human rights of persons as vulnerable as children and who violate international humanitarian law. There are millions of children in situations of armed conflict who are subjected to systematic violations of their rights, a situation that demands that we act with extreme urgency.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, and above all as a State that is aware of its responsibility as a member of the international community, Mexico invites the States that have not yet done so to ratify those and other instruments aimed at protecting those who today are affected by the scourge of war, exploitation, violence and abuse.

Mexico recognizes the important work of United Nations agencies and programmes, in particular UNICEF, and the International Committee of the Red Cross, as well as the extraordinary efforts of civil society organizations and individuals who, selflessly and often at the cost of their own lives, work every day to help children affected by armed conflict.

The Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. On that basis, Mexico calls on the Security Council, within the framework of its mandate, to continue addressing the repercussions of armed conflict on children and to promote specific actions aimed at fulfilling the recommendations of the Working Group, including imposing sanctions on the parties in conflict.

As Chairman of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Mexico will promote actions to put an end to the atrocities committed against children, with particular attention to refugees; displaced, separated and kidnapped children; those affected by AIDS/HIV; the disabled; and those subject to sexual exploitation and detention, as well as to address the consequences of the trafficking of weapons, anti-personnel mines and other types of munition on the lives and future of children.

Mexico calls on the international community to strengthen its efforts to protect children, in particular, first, to slow their recruitment and prevent their reincorporation into armed groups; secondly, to guarantee humanitarian access in every situation; thirdly, to contribute to children's physical protection by preventing their maiming as a result of landmines and the proliferation of arms; fourthly, to cooperate with and assist States that suffer the consequences of armed conflict in order to strengthen or establish programmes for the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of child soldiers into their communities and families; and fifthly, to promote assistance, with due consideration for age and gender, that includes health care, psychological support and education, always taking into consideration the well-being of children.

I wish once again to thank all the members of the Security Council for their confidence in and support for Mexico in its chairmanship of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, and to reiterate my country's commitment to this issue.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now call on the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): Let me begin by expressing the Philippines' solidarity with Mexico, its Government and its people as they face a new crisis that could affect the world.

The Philippines is grateful for this opportunity to address the Security Council following the issuance of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158). With the high priority that it gives to the promotion and protection of the rights of children, including in the context of armed conflict, the Philippines has always considered this issue to be of special importance and continues to view with utmost seriousness any negative report in this regard.

Owing to time constraints, I shall only read salient portions of my statement, the full text of which will be circulated to the Security Council.

The Philippines' commitment to the protection of children affected by armed conflict was particularly demonstrated when its Government facilitated the visit to the Philippines from 7 to 13 December 2008 of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. During that visit, she held dialogues with key officials from the Office of the President and relevant departments and offices of the Government. She also met with local Government officials, civil society actors and some women and children affected by armed conflict. In the course of these meetings, she saw the embodiment of our national comprehensive programme on children involved in armed conflict. I would like to highlight that, in order to drive the implementation of the programme, the Government continues to mobilize an inter-agency committee on children involved in armed conflict to work closely with the Commission on the Welfare of Children in overseeing actions to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of our national programme and to monitor the Philippines' compliance with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

Since Ms. Coomaraswamy's visit, our enhanced action has, first, increased awareness and capacity-training on children and armed conflict at the national and provincial levels, including institutionalizing this response in the training modules on national disaster and emergency management; secondly, developed rapid child-focused strategies within the various concerned Government agencies to assess, formulate and undertake action on the situation of children affected by armed conflict; and thirdly, expedited the submission of the report of the Philippines on the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children and armed conflict. Furthermore, in September 2009, the Philippines will be ready to report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child on its compliance with the Convention.

As an extraordinary measure, Ms. Coomaraswamy had an opportunity to meet with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to discuss concerns about the presence of children within the ranks of that rebel group. Allow me to reiterate the position of the Philippines that engaging non-State armed groups, including for the purpose of securing the protection of children, should be approached in a most careful manner. Since the situation of children in armed conflict arises against a complex background, any strategy to protect children in this case should be in harmony with the larger peace processes that the Government has launched with non-State groups in the country and in full coordination with the Philippine Government.

In fact, we already include specific provisions on children's protection in all peace negotiations, peace agreements and ceasefires. The protection of children has been mainstreamed into the peace process with the Communist Party of the Philippines-New Peoples' Army-National Democratic Front through the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. The Tripoli Agreement of 2001 between the Philippine Government and MILF provides a basis for expanding the protection regime for children affected by conflict.

We wish to recall what we stated in our intervention at the open debate of the Security Council on this agenda item on 17 July 2008. The Philippine Constitution enshrines the promotion and protection of the rights of children. The Philippines also maintains a vast arsenal of statutes on the promotion and protection of the rights of children, the most relevant of which is Republic Act No. 7610, providing for stronger deterrence of and special protection against child abuse, exploitation and discrimination. The Act prohibits the use of children in armed combat, protects them from armed conflicts, establishes children as zones of peace, and provides for the evacuation of

children during armed conflict. The Philippines is a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children and armed conflict.

The Security Council may recall that its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict has commended the Philippines for the high standard of its legal framework and policies for the welfare and protection of children. I am pleased to report that the Philippine Government has started the process of amending the act I just mentioned for the purpose of, inter alia, effectively operationalizing the concept of children as zones of peace and ensuring provisions for the non-criminal treatment and non-judicial rehabilitation of affected children, as recommended by Ms. Coomaraswamy. The Working Group has also lauded the Philippines for its cooperation with the United Nations regarding the appropriate establishment of a monitoring and reporting mechanism in the Philippines. Indeed, the collaborative work between my Government and the United Nations has begun positively, and I would like to assure the Council of my Government's commitment to continuing this cooperation.

I would like to briefly address some specific matters addressed in the section of the Secretary-General's report affecting the Philippines.

I cannot overemphasize the commitment of the Government of the Philippines to ensuring that children's rights are protected, including in the context of armed conflict. Therefore, any allegation against our armed forces is viewed with the highest degree of concern and seriousness. My Government assures the Security Council that all its mechanisms for investigation and military justice are fully in place to deal, as appropriate, with such cases.

With reference to paragraphs 122, 124 and 126, the armed forces of the Philippines are conducting a review of their procedures with a view to improving and reporting on and the handling, treatment and turnover of affected children; ensuring that directives to field commanders concerning child protection sensitivity and measures are carried out in their operations; and strengthening their links with our social development agencies to ensure the effective rehabilitation of these children. Also, to enhance accountability and facilitate coordination, both the military and the police have human rights offices that function as the focal points for dialogue with the United Nations country team on these issues.

As regards paragraph 125, the military has just re-emphasized in their directives the importance of respecting schools and ensuring that they remain safe for children. With reference to paragraph 127, it would be helpful if clarification could be provided in regard to the need to bring release and reintegration measures in line with good practices. To briefly describe our procedures in this area, as a matter of priority, our social workers trace the affected children's parents and relatives, who are given psychosocial and even livelihood support for the effective reintegration of their children. In cases where this is not possible, suitable adoption measures, as appropriate, are considered.

I believe that it is our common wish to eventually clear the lists of offending parties. The Security Council may wish to assess the level of commitment, the extent of mechanisms, efforts and progress in implementation, and the outcomes on the ground as indicators for the de-listing of parties. As the Philippines remains focused on these goals, the Council may consider a stronger focus on the encouragement and inspiration that de-listing can bring to sustaining the efforts to protect children in armed conflict.

Indeed, what the Philippines has accomplished so far in the area of children and armed conflict, and its excellent cooperation with the United Nations, now justify dropping it from the countries that are listed in annex II in accordance with Council resolution 1612 (2005). Justice demands, and due process supports, such de-listing. Not to do that may perpetuate a double standard of justice vis-à-vis other areas of more serious concerns in many places in this suffering world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I appeal to all speakers to make their statements as brief as possible and to distribute their statements, if necessary.

I call next on the representative of Canada.

Mr. McNee (Canada) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to congratulate the Foreign Minister of Mexico for her statement and congratulate Mexico upon having assumed the chair of the Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We are convinced that Mexico will discharge its duties

with the same conviction and efficiency as was shown by the French chair.

This debate was introduced today by very useful statements by United Nations representatives and by the eloquent and necessary testimony by Ms. Grace Akallo.

Canada welcomes this open debate and the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158). This debate provides us another opportunity to bring to the attention of the Council the severity of continued acts of violence against children. Too often today, we see the devastating effects that armed conflict has on children, including the profound repercussions on their living conditions. Sri Lanka, Somalia, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo illustrate this tragedy. Children are injured, killed and displaced and become victims of sexual and gender-based violence. They are directly or indirectly recruited as soldiers. To that we add separation from their families and the impossibility of pursuing their education. Sadly, this list is not exhaustive.

Canada commends the Security Council for its innovative initiatives in building a framework for protecting children in situations of armed conflict. We applaud the work of the Secretary-General and his team. In particular, I would like to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, for her commitment, her vigorous advocacy and for the wealth of reporting by her office.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada strongly supports Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) and the implementation of an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism for violations against children. We would like to recognize the tremendous work of UNICEF and the non-governmental organization and civil society actors who contribute to the 1612 monitoring and reporting mechanism. The impact of resolution 1612 (2005) is real and measurable, as demonstrated by the release of children from the ranks of armed groups around the world. The monitoring and reporting mechanism has now been implemented or put in place in all the situations listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's 2007 report (S/2007/757). This is in itself a significant achievement. We hope to see further advancement of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, engaging with youth and strengthening the mechanism for the security of these children, to improve the protection provided.

Canada would like to commend the work of the Security Council Working Group created by resolution 1612 (2005). We would also like to acknowledge the strong support provided by the Secretariat to the Working Group. The actionable conclusions and guidance issued by the Working Group have demonstrated the Council's commitment to prevent crimes against children in situations of conflict and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable under national and international law. We hope that in the coming months the Working Group will be able to travel to the field for concrete exposure that would better inform its work.

Thanks to the hard work of these individuals and organizations, there is a much greater awareness of the terrible plight of these children. There remains, however, an environment of impunity for those who persist in committing the most serious crimes against children in situations of armed conflict, which has been highlighted by the Special Representative and the Secretary-General. In this regard, let me take this opportunity to register once again Canada's strong view that the existing monitoring and reporting mechanism should be triggered by all six grave violations against children outlined in resolution 1612 (2005).

We must continue to uphold the rights of children in situations of armed conflict and to strengthen and expand them. Violations of resolution 1612 (2005) continue, including a disturbing increase in rape and other sexual violations against both girls and boys. We have an opportunity before us to fill an important gap in the child protection framework, including through negotiation of a new resolution. It should provide for a monitoring and reporting mechanism triggered by the recruitment and use of children, rape and other grave sexual violence, intentional killing and maiming of children, abductions, attacks on schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access to children by parties to armed conflict. Canada urges the Council to take concrete actions to make this happen.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to extend to you, Mr. President, our full solidarity in this time when Mexico is confronting the serious

swine flu epidemic. I also wish to express the appreciation of my delegation for the presence of Foreign Minister Patricia Espinosa at this discussion. Her participation adds even more political significance to our dealing with the important topic that brings us together today. It also underlines Mexico's commitment to this issue and celebrates Mexico's competent presidency of the Council.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his statement this morning and for the report before us (S/2009/158). I also wish to commend Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for the remarkable work she has been doing. I wish to recognize as well the important contribution that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNICEF bring to our common endeavours.

The moving testimony of Grace Akallo is a reminder to all of us of the need to pursue and strengthen our efforts to protect children in armed conflict.

My delegation is pleased with the progress achieved in the implementation of Council resolutions on the protection of children in armed conflict, especially resolution 1612 (2005). Monitoring and reporting mechanisms have been established for all situations listed in annexes I and II to the Secretary-General's 2007 report (S/2007/757). Just as important, new action plans have either been signed or are being discussed with parties to conflicts. We encourage the continuation of such efforts, always in close consultation with interested Member States.

We also welcome progress made in mainstreaming children and armed conflict issues in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions. One aspect that deserves particular attention is the protection of displaced persons camps, where recruiting of children is reported to take place. Failing to protect families and individuals from such a scourge not only means inflicting new suffering on people already struck by tragedy, but threatens the Organization and its missions with unacceptable discredit.

There has also been progress in specific conflict situations. However, in reviewing the document, my delegation was particularly struck by instances where a variety of State actors were engaged in acts of violence against children or in behaviour that endangered them. Although such acts are to be condemned regardless of their perpetrators, States bear a special responsibility. They must lead by example in their own territories and in those territories where their forces are placed for whatever reason and purpose. From the mountains in Afghanistan to the towns in Gaza and the villages in Africa, children in armed conflicts must find in States an active protector and never an agent of violence, even if unintended.

Brazil is particularly concerned with all forms of sexual violence against children in armed conflicts. Not only are such crimes particularly traumatizing but they may also pose further obstacles to future reconciliation. We therefore support efforts to better monitor violations, provide reliable information on sexual abuse by forces of all origins and improve coordination among United Nations agencies. The proposed inclusion of rape and other grave sexual violence as a trigger for inclusion in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report certainly merits careful consideration in light of the mandate of the Security Council. In so doing, Council members should reflect on the most appropriate way to address killing and maiming of children.

Brazil is also concerned with the reintegration of children in countries emerging from conflict. The Peacebuilding Commission has an important role to play in that matter. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes must address the recovery and development of children affected by violence committed by armed forces.

The report of the Secretary-General is yet another powerful call to Member States to fight violence against children in armed conflicts. We should heed the call. In so doing, we will help lay a solid basis for peace, stability and human development not only in countries emerging from conflict, but also in their regions. Importantly, the future of those children will have been safeguarded and our mission accomplished.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of the Czech Republic.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): First, let me express our sympathy with the people of Mexico for the outbreak of the flu epidemic.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Croatia and

the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, as well as Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, let me thank the presidency, Mexico, for organizing an open debate and reaffirm the European Union's strong support to the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. I would also like to express our support for the work of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, whose outreach activities and field visits contribute significantly to improving the situation of children in armed conflict. On behalf of the European Union, I would like to thank UNICEF and other United Nations agencies and implementation partners for their vital field work and the input they have made to the Secretary-General's current report on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158).

The European Union remains deeply concerned about the situation of children affected by armed conflicts around the world and endorses the current report of the Secretary-General as well as the recommendations contained therein. More efforts should be made to eliminate harmful practices affecting girls and boys in armed conflict. Moreover, the European Union highlights the need to continue to address the short- and long-term impacts of armed conflict on children in an effective, sustainable and comprehensive manner.

This year we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the European Union wishes to use this occasion to call on all countries to universally implement that Convention and its Optional Protocol. The European Union also calls on all countries to adhere to and implement the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, adopted in February 2007.

The European Union emphasizes the need for the close coordination of policies regarding the protection of civilians across the scope of United Nations activities in key areas such as human rights, gender equality, rule of law, development policies, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform.

The European Union welcomes the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict established by Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), especially the progress on the design and implementation of action plans as indicated in the Secretary-General's report. In that respect, the European Union reiterates the importance of providing specific child protection advisers in peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions. In order to see even more progress in the future, access to all parties involved, including non-State parties, must be ensured.

The European Union calls on Governments and all parties concerned to abolish and prevent the practice of recruitment and use of children in armed forces or armed groups in clear violation of international legal obligations and other relevant principles. Moreover, the European Union reaffirms its full support of the work of the International Criminal Court in the fight against impunity for the recruitment and use of child soldiers and as a dissuasive instrument for potential perpetrators. The European Union emphasizes the need to ensure a more intensive cooperation between the Working Group and the relevant sanctions committees.

Furthermore, we support the call to the Security Council to take appropriate account of all categories of grave violations. The European Union encourages the Council to take concrete measures vis-à-vis those parties listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report, including the use of sanctions for repeat offenders who have shown themselves unwilling to engage in meaningful dialogue to put an end to violations.

Accordingly, the European Union remains deeply concerned with the increase of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, both boys and girls, in armed conflict. Action needs to be taken without delay against those egregious violations. Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) are relevant in that regard and must be implemented. The European Union urges the Security Council to expand the criteria for violations that trigger the listing of a party in annexes attached to the report of the Secretary-General, and to include parties to armed conflict that commit rape and other grave sexual violence against children, as well as the intentional killing and maiming of children.

The European Union is firmly committed to addressing the impact of armed conflict on children in an effective, sustainable and comprehensive manner. The European Union continues to implement updated guidelines on children and armed conflict through the monitoring and reporting mechanisms in 19 priority countries, and cooperates with the United Nations, national and regional organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society on the basis of resolution 1612 (2005). A vast range of child protection projects are financed by the European Union through various instruments. Those include 15 million euros for the 2008 thematic programme, Investing in People, to support children affected by armed conflict and trafficking; 5 million euros for the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights — towards children's rights; in addition to substantial broad humanitarian support.

Further, the European Union advocates a systematic mainstreaming of human rights, gender issues and child protection into the European Security and Defence Policy operations on the basis of the Checklist for the Integration of the Protection of Children affected by Armed Conflict, and promotes a comprehensive approach to the issue through humanitarian, development, security and human rights instruments. Those commitments are further articulated in the European Commission communication entitled, "A Special Place for Children in European Union External Action".

The European Union strongly encourages the Council to improve and enhance, without further delay, its response to violations committed against children in situations of armed conflict, in particular sexual violence, building upon the experience and lessons learned in the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), and taking into consideration the recommendations proposed by the Secretary-General in his current report. The European Union looks forward to the adoption of an action-oriented presidential statement by the Security Council as a first step in that respect.

Let me assure the Council of the European Union's continued commitment to this important issue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3.15 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.20 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6114 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6114th meeting

Wednesday, 29 April 2009, 3.15 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Heller/Mr. Puente	(Mexico)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Ebner
	Burkina Faso	Ms. Fofana
	China	Ms. Li Xinyan
	Costa Rica	Mr. González
	Croatia	Ms. Kožar
	France	Mr. Fieschi
	Japan	Mr. Ashiki
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lukiyantsev
	Turkey	Mr. Ünal
	Uganda	Mr. Muhumuza
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Steele
	United States of America	Ms. Lavin
	Viet Nam	Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Ha

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

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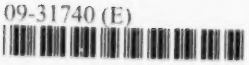

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The meeting resumed at 3.20 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Armenia, Benin and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to request that this afternoon's speakers kindly limit their statements to a maximum of five minutes, taking into account that we still have an extensive list of speakers who would like to take the floor this afternoon.

On behalf of the members of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to Her Excellency Ms. Marie-Ange Lukinana Mufwankol, Minister of Gender, Family and Children Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and give her the floor.

Ms. Mufwankol (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, first of all, let me convey the warm congratulations of the Congolese delegation for the effective way in which you are directing the Council's deliberations in this month of April. I would like to thank you in particular for having convened this meeting of the Security Council on children and armed conflict, the difficult subject that we are debating today. In this regard, I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his very objective and informative report (S/2009/158). My thanks go as well to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, whom we had the honour to receive in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the presentation of her edifying report on this subject, highlighting the obligation to put an end to recruitment and use of children in armed conflict. Her visit and others, which have helped advance the cause of women and children, have had positive repercussions.

The theme of today's meeting on violence against children is of vital importance for our country, because in this area the Democratic Republic of the Congo is in the centre of the storm. The Democratic Republic is coming out of a long political, social and economic crisis that has been worsened by disastrous consequences of the war of aggression and armed conflict, with their stream of acute violence, in which women and children, who have been massively exposed, exploited and impoverished, have been the primary victims.

Here, we would say specifically that increasingly, the recruitment and abusive use of children is the effect of both foreign and national armed groups belonging to various rebel factions. We would also note that, for the purposes of peace and national reconciliation, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) itself, the regular Congolese army, has been engaged in a long process of folding in large waves of former rebels of all grades, even commanders, since 2003.

Given the scope of the challenge, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the plea regarding the need for effective support by the international community in seeking a stable peace and in promoting democracy, both in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in other countries in the Great Lakes region and throughout the world.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) has edified us on progress made and on measures taken by the parties with a view to eliminating grave violations, which are nevertheless still continuing. Concerned by this situation, the elected institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, led by President Joseph Kabila, are doing everything they can to put an end to these grave violations of the fundamental rights of children.

Among the efforts made, one can cite the promulgation in January 2009 of the statute to protect children, which brings in international standards for the protection of children and is a complement to the law against sexual violence of 2006. We can also cite the establishment of the Fund to Protect Children and Promote Women, as well as the Agency for Combating Violence against Women and Children. Also significant are the reinforcement of the programme to fight impunity and to help programmes for disarmament,

demobilization, repatriation and reintegration, especially with respect to child soldiers.

Moreover, in a determined political will, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children Affairs, has launched an appeal for a general mobilization to combat violence and other violations of human rights perpetrated against women and children. In November 2008 this general mobilization was expressed by the Campaign of Congolese Women at a level of national outrage in the form of the petition "Je dénonce" and in a gigantic protest march on 16 December. This message translated the essential concern of Congolese women and children regarding their right to life, peace, security, human dignity and well-being.

All these efforts have been made possible thanks primarily to the cooperation between my Government, the United Nations system and other partners that support development. We therefore support implementation of the recommendations of the Secretary-General as contained in the different reports on children in armed conflict as well as recommendations of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The programmes for disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration and for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation, both for national armed groups and foreign groups, must continue and must be brought to completion.

In order to put a real end to the agony of Congolese children, my delegation can only reiterate the position of Congolese women and children, which calls for greater and more resolute involvement by the Security Council to strengthen international solidarity to build peace, territorial integrity and sovereignty in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It calls for the complete eradication of foreign and national armed groups, created by the poor management by all of the international humanitarian corridor of 1994, whose goals to save 1 million people's lives following the genocide were nevertheless noble. However, for the peaceful innocent Congolese hosts, that corridor became a conduit for exporting death, for the widespread rape of children and women, for pillaging national resources and for the prevalence of AIDS, with a heavy toll of 5 million dead and 2 million displaced, primarily women and children.

We need the Security Council's support for the promotion of an international emergency reconstruction plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the example of Marshall Plan, with Congolese children and women as the main target. Lastly, democracy needs to be promoted in the other countries of the Great Lakes Region, and national and intercommunity dialogues should be held, with a view to eliminating latent conflicts in neighbouring countries that are feeding destabilization of peace in the subregion, resulting in the huge and cyclical suffering of our respective populations.

In conclusion, Mr. President, I would like to thank you once again and the many other speakers for their positive contributions towards lasting solutions not only for the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also for all countries concerned. For us, it is a question of putting an end to war, impunity and the unspeakable suffering of our populations and, in particular, of children in areas of conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Minister for her important statement, which I am certain all members of the Council have noted.

I now give the floor to the representative of Chile.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening a debate on the important topic of children in armed conflict. I would like to express my support for your country on account of the difficult time that it is currently experiencing. Chile endorses the statement by the representative of Ireland, the country that is chairing the Human Security Network to which Chile belongs.

Although the international community recognizes children as subjects in law, in reality their rights are disregarded daily in situations of armed conflict. For that reason, we support the work done by the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, established by resolution 1612 (2005), as well as by UNICEF, various non-governmental organizations and civil society, actors that are jointly contributing to the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanism under that resolution. We also acknowledge the significant work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and are following with interest her activities in the field. We also thank her for her presence this past Saturday at a football match between

ambassadors and the Secretary-General in aid of the children of Sierra Leone.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and International Labour Organization Convention 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, Chile reiterates its commitment to the initiatives aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against children, in particular, those that we are discussing today.

True to that commitment, on 25 September 2008, Chile endorsed the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, known as the Paris Principles, which reflect significant progress in prevention and reintegration and in the special needs of girls in armed conflicts. In accordance with the Principles, we support multilateral actions aimed at lessening and eradicating this scourge by means of more consistent planning, sustainable reintegration and the promotion of prevention activities aimed at protecting the environment of children.

The Council should use its authority to identify and punish those responsible for the atrocities documented in the latest report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158) and to implement its important recommendations. Chile believes that the Council should enhance the protection of children, enabling the strengthening of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, envisaged in resolution 1612 (2005), such that it can be triggered in cases of intentional actions that do not constitute collateral damage. We support the recommendation that giving equal attention to children affected by armed conflict in all situations of concern be considered. We particularly welcome the recommendation that the Council consider, at a minimum, expanding the criteria for the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General to include parties that commit rape and other grave sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict. Likewise, we note with interest the possibility of addressing other types of abuse, including, if possible, the intentional killing and maiming of children, which, like the recruitment and use of children and sexual violence, constitute deliberate and selective acts reflecting criminal intent.

Similarly, we call for guarantees that the mandates of the relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions continue to include specific provisions for the protection of children, the permanent deployment of child protection advisers and the training of troops on this issue. In that regard, since its creation in 2002, the Chilean Joint Centre for Peacekeeping Operations has been training Chilean and foreign civilians, military and police, using a comprehensive approach.

We also urge that the monitoring and reporting of violations against children should be accompanied by effective measures to prevent such violations and to generate timely reactions. Lastly, we stress the importance of the Working Group having the necessary resources to carry out its work effectively and to use the tools at its disposal, in particular field visits and emergency meetings.

Almost four years after the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005), Chile reiterates its commitment to actively contribute to the elimination of all forms of violence affecting children throughout the world from armed conflict to urban violence. We will continue to support all initiatives that seek compliance with international commitments in that area.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Windsor (Australia): Australia is very grateful for this opportunity to restate its commitment to strong and effective measures to protect and rehabilitate children from harm and exploitation in situations of armed conflict. Australia worked to ensure the renewal of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict during the sixty-third session of the General Assembly and we commend Ms. Coomaraswamy's progress in mainstreaming this issue.

Australia recognizes the importance of effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and, to that end, in September 2008 endorsed the Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups and committed funding to UNICEF for its work on child soldiers, particularly in Sri Lanka.

Australia welcomes recent progress in implementing resolution 1612 (2005) and in

operationalizing the monitoring and reporting mechanism. We are pleased that the mechanism has now been adopted in all situations listed in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2009/158). That achievement will be further advanced by ensuring that all parties develop concrete, time-bound action plans that meet international standards. We commend the recent real progress in halting the recruitment and use of child soldiers.

However, more remains to be done. Australia is particularly concerned about ongoing reports of the forced recruitment and use of child soldiers by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka and of the continued recruitment and use of child soldiers by the national forces and other parties in Myanmar. The current situation in Sri Lanka only serves to underscore the serious impact that that conflict has on children. We owe it to all children in situations of armed conflict to strengthen the current monitoring and reporting process.

Australia reiterates that there should be no hierarchy of treatment amongst the six grave violations. Australia is very concerned at the large number of reported sexual violations contained in the Secretary-General's report. We are particularly concerned at the significant number of reported cases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Clearly, rape and other forms of sexual violence are endemic in many conflict situations worldwide. The threat that this poses to peace and security was recognized by the Council when it adopted resolution 1820 (2008). The Council should consider the feasibility of a new resolution to expand the scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to include, at a minimum, rape and other forms of sexual violence as a trigger for listing.

We recognize that the mechanism should be expanded only if it enhances the protection of children in armed conflict and the effectiveness of resolution 1612 (2005). A well-supported and adequately resourced Working Group is crucial to the mechanism's effectiveness. That would not only ensure that the Working Group is well placed to respond to any new situations that may be included in its agenda, but also assist its ability to respond promptly to rapidly evolving situations of urgent concern.

International efforts to address the problem of children in armed conflict must be accompanied by effective action at the national level. Concerned States, including Myanmar, should allow United Nations access to listed non-State parties for the purpose of discussing possible child protection measures. Effective domestic legislation, including legislation criminalizing rape and other sexual crimes, is of paramount importance. We encourage the adoption by concerned parties of national action plans on sexual violence and commend the efforts of parties in Côte d'Ivoire in that regard.

With regard to the broader issue of violence against children, I am pleased to announce that today, the Australian Government released "Time for Action", a major report prepared by the Australian National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. The Australian Government simultaneously announced its intention to move immediately to advance 18 of the 20 priority recommendations of the report. The Government will further consider the remaining two recommendations within the context of developing a national plan to reduce violence against women and children.

Australia encourages the Working Group to utilize the full range of tools available to it in responding to situations of concern. Given the valuable and constructive results of the Special Representative's field visits, including her recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there may be real merit in the Group's visiting situations in which persistent violations occur or in which there has been no reaction to the Group's recommendations. Persistent violators should not go unpunished. National and international accountability is at the heart of resolution 1612 (2005) and will have a significant deterrent effect.

In conclusion, the commitment of all Member States is required to realize the full potential of resolution 1612 (2005) and to further the fight against impunity. We must work together to fight the scourge of violence against children in all its forms. Australia remains firmly dedicated to that goal.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. De Klerk (Netherlands): The Netherlands fully aligns itself with the statement made this morning by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. I would like to make a few additional remarks -- first, on the

expansion of the trigger mechanism for monitoring and reporting; and secondly, on impunity.

I would like to begin by thanking you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict and for the work that Mexico is doing in this area.

It is a sad reality that, as we speak, many children around the world are being harmed for life by armed conflicts. Sometimes, they happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. More often than not, they are a tool or a target of shameless violence. Whatever the case, we all have an urgent obligation to do whatever we can to protect children from armed conflict. That is a political and moral imperative for all of us. Along with the integrity of our children, the integrity of the Organization and everything it stands for is at stake. In children we see our future, and in their suffering during armed conflict we see the dark side of humankind. We heard impressive testimony to that effect earlier in the debate.

The Netherlands strongly supports the valuable work of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and that of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We also thank the Secretary-General for his most recent report on that subject (S/2009/158).

We commend the Security Council for the important progress made on its agenda related to children and armed conflict, in particular with regard to the use and recruitment of child soldiers. However, the Council should take further action to ensure that children caught in armed conflicts are protected from violence and related threats to their security and well-being. To that end, the Council should expand its focus to include the other grave violations against children in armed conflict, as they affect much larger numbers of children and result in terrible and long-lasting consequences.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism has shown its value. Effective monitoring and reporting help to reveal the extent and severity of violations, increase the accountability of those who target, abuse or exploit children and, last but not least, strengthen programmes to assist and protect children in situations of armed conflict. One step that the Security Council should take is to extend the applicability of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to other situations in which grave violations against children in armed conflict occur — first and foremost, rape and other grave sexual violence.

Why should the Council do so? Over the past 20 years, rape and other forms of sexual violence have been documented in at least 50 conflicts, affecting millions of individuals, predominantly girls and women. Like the recruitment and use of child soldiers, rape and other forms of sexual violence are intentional acts committed by individual perpetrators. Parties to armed conflict can take action to hold those perpetrators accountable for their actions. Progress in ending such violations can be measured, allowing for de-listing, an incentive for change.

In dozens of ongoing armed conflicts, sexual violence continues to threaten the safety of women and girls on a daily basis. In some armed conflicts, boys also become victims of sexual violence, although in smaller numbers than girls. Rape and sexual violence against children may have long-term and long-lasting consequences, and their impact may affect future generations as well. Think, for instance, about the situation of children born as a result of rape and about their traumas, which may damage them — and, again, others — for life.

In its resolution 1820 (2008), the Council has already stressed that sexual violence can significantly exacerbate situations of armed conflict and may impede the restoration of international peace and security, and has expressed its readiness to adopt appropriate steps to address widespread or systematic sexual violence. The expansion of the trigger mechanism to cover the crime of rape and other forms of grave sexual violence against children should be seen as an appropriate step.

My second point: In most cases, the Security Council has not taken strong steps to address accountability and end impunity for perpetrators of violations against children, especially with regard to persistent violators. As stated before in this Council, abuse really stops only when perpetrators have been brought to justice. Anything short of that means a continuation of the violation of victims' integrity. That is why ending impunity is a critical element in ending violations and abuses against children. The Member States concerned should take effective action to bring to justice individuals responsible for violations of children's rights. Those who recruit or use child

soldiers, those who rape or commit other grave sexual violence against children — all should be held to account. We therefore stress the role of the International Criminal Court in the investigation and prosecution of such crimes falling within its jurisdiction. Where national systems of justice fail, either because of the unwillingness or because of the inability to genuinely prosecute such violations against children in armed conflict, the situation should be referred to the Court.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea): First, allow me to commend the work of the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to protect children affected by armed conflict with a view to ending the grave violations against them. My delegation would also like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for their dedication and continued efforts in addressing the plight of children in armed conflict. We also welcome the renewed mandate of the Special Representative.

The Republic of Korea appreciates the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158), which covers 15 situations on the agenda of the Security Council and five other areas of concern in a comprehensive way, including a section on rape and other grave forms of sexual violence against children during times of conflict.

The information on compliance and progress in ending the recruitment and use of children contained in the report shows that there has been progress in some countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire. However, in some situations, child recruitment remains an issue of serious concern.

Only nine out of 63 armed groups listed in the annexes of the report have signed action plans to stop the recruitment of child soldiers. As emphasized in the Secretary-General's report, concerned Member States should allow contact between the United Nations and non-State parties to prepare action plans without prejudice to the political and legal status of those armed groups. Dealing with persistent violators also remains a critical issue that must be addressed with a sense of urgency.

Within the Secretary-General's report, 19 persistent perpetrators have been identified, increasing the number from the 16 listed in last year's report. Many of these residual perpetrators have also been responsible for committing other grave violations, such as rape and sexual violence against children. The Security Council needs to stand resolute and apply targeted measures to these persistent perpetrators. One way to facilitate the real use of targeted measures is to establish systematic communications between the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant sanctions committees.

The delegation of the Republic of Korea, like those of many other Member States, is disturbed by the continuing deplorable situation of sexual violence against children in armed conflict. The Secretary-General's report gives us a worrisome picture, especially of the situations in Burundi, Chad, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Somalia and the Sudan. There is universal consensus that widespread and systematic sexual violence against children in armed conflicts are grave crimes, as stated in the Secretary-General's report. Unless the Security Council and the international community respond strongly to these violations, such troubling cases will continue.

This morning, we had a truly invaluable opportunity to confirm the atrocity of sexual violence against children through the firsthand account of an eyewitness. In this context, my delegation strongly endorses the recommendation of the Secretary-General that the Security Council adopt an incremental approach by first including rape and other grave sexual violence as an additional criterion for inclusion in the annexes, along with the recruitment and use of children. We emphasize that a priority step to strengthen child protection on the ground is to expand the trigger of the monitoring and reporting mechanism to include grave sexual violence.

Addressing sexual violence is an important system-wide priority of the United Nations. As such, resolutions 1612 (2005), 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) should be implemented in a mutually reinforcing manner, with a view to maximizing the synergy effect.

My delegation welcomes the progress made in the mainstreaming of the issue of children in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions. The work

of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs in developing policy directives and guidance is significant. We encourage the further integration of children's concerns into all mission planning instruments and processes, including the deployment of child protection advisers to all relevant missions.

Finally, my delegation hopes that our open debate today testifies to our strong commitment to this critical issue, not through our numerous verbal statements, but by taking concrete and resolute action to ensure the protection of children exposed to and suffering from armed conflict. There is a wide range of actions that the Security Council can and should take. Some of the urgent actions, such as expanding the trigger of the monitoring and response mechanism to include rape and other grave sexual violence, will require a new resolution. In this vein, we strongly support the immediate commencement of serious work by the Council members with a view to adopting such a resolution as soon as possible. Safeguarding the rights of the next generation of vulnerable children in global conflict zones is in our hands. Now is the time to act.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Finland.

Mr. Viinanen (Finland): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict. This debate is about our children and grandchildren. There cannot be a more important matter than this.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

Children bear the heaviest burden of armed conflict, although they are the least responsible for it. The Nordic countries would like to reiterate their deep gratitude for the tireless efforts made by the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict to record violations against children, to bring them to the attention of the international community, to call the perpetrators to account and to make proposals for concrete action to monitor the violence and to bring relief to the children who are suffering. We fully endorse the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158) and the recommendations made therein.

All forms of violence against children must be condemned. Each of the six categories of grave violations set out in resolution 1612 (2005) must be addressed with equal vigour. Rape and other forms of sexual violence are heinous crimes. In addition to the immediate physical, mental and emotional damage, they often cause lasting harm to sexual and reproductive health. They spread HIV and other serious diseases. They cause disabilities that diminish the capacity for learning, safe parenthood and social interaction. All too often, it is the victim who is stigmatized while the perpetrator escapes punishment.

Girls and women constitute the largest group of victims in armed conflict. As the Secretary-General's report shows, they are particularly vulnerable to gender-based and sexual violence perpetrated by all sides in conflicts, sometimes even by the peacekeepers who are supposed to safeguard them. The united condemnation of such crimes by the international community has been heartening. However, urgent and forceful action is still required. The Nordic countries fully endorse the recommendation that the Security Council expand, at a minimum, the criteria that trigger listing in the annexes to this report to include rape and other grave sexual violence.

The efforts to monitor and address gender-based and sexual violence and other grave violations set out in resolution 1612 (2005) could benefit from increasing interaction and collaboration among the United Nations and regional actors. For example, synergies should be established between the monitoring mechanisms established to support the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) and resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security and the protection of civilians in armed conflicts.

We would like to express our satisfaction with the work undertaken by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in designing a global policy on child protection advisers and in mainstreaming child protection issues in the work of the peacekeeping and political missions of the United Nations. We look forward to the implementation of that policy by rolling it out to the field.

The Nordic countries strongly commend the efforts of civil society. In spite of their often limited resources and the most dangerous working conditions, local non-governmental organizations provide invaluable information and concrete action that no

other actor could provide with such intensity, reach and effectiveness. We note with deep appreciation the support provided by civil society organizations in developing more effective policies and other tools to protect children in armed conflict. We welcome the emphasis of the Secretary-General on cooperation with non-State actors.

Recruitment and use of children by armed groups is a persistent problem and a reason for deep concern. The recruitment of boys and girls to take part in hostilities is a violation of international law and a war crime in both international and non-international armed conflicts. The prohibition on recruiting or using child soldiers must be matched by effective implementation at the domestic level. The Nordic countries again wish to emphasize the need for all parties to armed conflicts to present concrete, time-bound action plans ending and preventing the recruitment of child soldiers. Among the greatest challenges we face is that of impunity.

The first case before the International Criminal Court (ICC) to have proceeded to trial phase, the one against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, is a milestone in the efforts to end impunity for the use of child soldiers. The Nordic countries call on all States to become parties to the Rome Statute and to effectively implement its provisions in their national legislations. Moreover, we urge the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to use the full range of measures at its disposal, especially when it comes to persistent perpetrators. We call upon the Council to ensure that interaction and cooperation among the Working Group and the sanctions committees is made more speedy and effective, and to use the most effective measures at its disposal, including targeted sanctions. The Council should refer violations against children in armed conflict to the ICC for investigation and prosecution when national Governments fail to carry out their responsibility to protect those children. At the same time, we wish to recall that the rule of law, including a functioning judicial system at the national level, is a necessary condition for peace and stability.

The growing incidence of attacks on schools recounted in the Secretary-General's report is of deep concern to the Nordic countries. We call upon United Nations country teams, peacekeepers and Governments to actively negotiate among community stakeholders and parties to armed conflict to designate schools as safe sanctuaries.

In concluding, the Nordic countries wish to express their deep concern with the unacceptable suffering of children in the military end game in northern Sri Lanka. The ongoing recruitment of children into the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), as well as the fact that civilians continue to be prevented from leaving the war zone, fill us with dread. We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to protect all the civilians in the area, especially children, in accordance with its obligations under humanitarian law.

This year we commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We call for universal adherence and implementation of the Convention and its two Optional Protocols. The Nordic countries would like to reiterate their encouragement to the Security Council and to the entire United Nations system to give children in armed conflict the attention they deserve and to constantly seek the most effective means to improve their situation. Institutional prerogatives or procedural traditions should never stand in the way of concrete action.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Kavanagh (Ireland): I would like to thank you, Sir, and the members of the Council for this opportunity to address the Council on the important issue of children and armed conflict. Ireland also aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

Ireland welcomes Mexico's initiative in organizing today's open debate of the Council. We strongly support all endeavours made at the United Nations and at the regional and national levels which seek to address in an effective manner the situation of children in armed conflict.

Ireland commends ongoing efforts to ensure that this important issue remains firmly on the agenda of the Security Council. We support the implementation of the monitoring and reporting mechanisms on children and armed conflict established under Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) — as well as the significant work being carried out by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Ireland warmly welcomes the current report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) and the recommendations therein. In particular, we commend the significant progress made in mainstreaming the issue of children in armed conflict in United Nations peacekeeping and political missions. The deployment of child protection advisers in a number of peacekeeping operations is a positive step and helps to enhance the monitoring of the situation, improve dialogue with parties to conflict and ensure systematic training on child rights and protection.

Ireland is the current Chair of the Human Security Network and notes that the harmful and widespread impact of armed conflict on children has been one of the priority issues for the Network since its establishment. As part of our chairmanship, Ireland has chosen to focus on the theme of gender-based violence. The prevalence of gender-based violence during times of conflict, in areas where the rule of law is frequently absent and impunity is widespread, remains a grave concern. Successive resolutions of the Security Council have also recognized those egregious abuses. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) highlights the human rights of girls and their right to protection from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse. Resolution 1820 (2008) attacks the targeting of girls through the use of sexual violence and demands that all parties to armed conflict take appropriate measures to protect women and girls from sexual violence.

The Secretary-General's report expressly acknowledges that Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1820 (2008) are "mutually reinforcing" and that steps should be taken to streamline documentation and sharing of information on rape and sexual violence.

In that regard, the initiation of consultations between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict and relevant United Nations agencies and departments, in order to devise a strategy to strengthen data collection and reporting, is, we believe, a positive development. Ireland welcomes the attention given in the Secretary-General's report to rape and other grave sexual violence against children in armed conflict.

The report reaffirms that rape and other forms of sexual violence are grave crimes and, under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, constitute a war crime or a crime against humanity if committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population. In particular, Ireland supports the Secretary-General's recommendation, set out in the report, that the Council expand the criteria for violations that would trigger the listing of a party in the annexes attached to such reports. By the same token, we support the recommendation to include, henceforth, express reference to those parties that commit rape and other grave sexual violence against children, as well as intentional killing and maiming of children.

Ireland continues to support the valuable efforts of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and her Office. She has done great work by raising awareness, engaging with parties to conflict through field visits and ensuring that this issue is kept high on the international agenda.

Ireland further commends ongoing efforts on this crucial topic made by UNICEF, other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, along with non-governmental organizations, regional organizations and national authorities.

In conclusion, my country is committed to working closely with the United Nations system, as well as with all other relevant organizations, to ensure that steps are taken and progress is achieved towards improving the deplorable situation faced by children in armed conflicts around the world.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Ms. Shalev (Israel): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important debate and for your leadership of the Security Council during this month.

As some may know, we are celebrating today the sixty-first anniversary of the independence of the modern State of Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people. Nevertheless, in the light of the importance of this debate and the issue at hand, I have decided to participate.

Let me thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for her great help and for her introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158). Also, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alain Le Roy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Ann Veneman, for their

briefings. I am also very grateful for the moving testimony given this morning by Ms. Grace Akallo, as well as for her courage in surviving the horrors she faced and her willingness to share her experience with us. We wish to commend the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict for its vital work in raising the profile of this issue and for working to protect children living in difficult circumstances caused by armed conflict.

There can be no doubt that, since the Council unanimously adopted resolution 1612 (2005), establishing the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the monitoring and reporting mechanism, the increased international focus on this issue has resulted in improved protection for many of the estimated 300,000 child soldiers around the world. Among the notable achievements is the pressure exerted on armed groups to desist from child recruitment and to release youths who have already been conscripted into armed groups. Indeed, several armed groups have been de-listed from the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports, and the first trial initiated by the International Criminal Court earlier this year in The Hague is a milestone in the issue of child soldiers. In addition to encouraging the release of child soldiers, placing the spotlight on these violations and on those who commit them has the significant effect of discouraging future abuse by others.

Another area that warrants greater attention is rape and other grave forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict — in this case, violence of the most despicable kind: violence perpetrated against children. There is a growing consensus in favour of adding this violation as a trigger for the listing of specific groups that warrant the attention and monitoring of the Working Group. These acts are deliberate and are often carried out as tools of war and terror. Israel adds its voice to those of States calling for the addition of grave sexual violence to the list of violations that trigger the listing of a party in the Secretary-General's annexes.

Terrorism deliberately targeting civilians, including children, continues to plague many regions in the world. Only a few weeks ago, an Israeli child was murdered and another seriously wounded by an axe-wielding terrorist. In the recent armed conflict between Israel and the Hamas terrorist entity in Gaza, Hamas terrorists displayed the same callous disregard for the lives of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians, including children. They initiated the conflict by their years-long barrage of rockets and mortars launched from Gaza into Israel, killing, wounding and terrorizing civilians across the southern part of my country. These rockets and mortars were often launched from heavily populated civilian areas, very often in close proximity to schools and hospitals. During the recent conflict, Hamas terrorists hid among Gaza's civilian population, using and abusing them as human shields. While civilians have been too intimidated to denounce the terrorists for this abhorrent practice, the evidence for its widespread use is overwhelming and incontrovertible. And while children were trained, indoctrinated and used by Hamas in the hostilities, the Secretary-General's report states only that "community members are reluctant to provide information on cases of children used by armed forces or armed groups for fear of reprisals" (*S/2009/158, para. 86*).

We should also remember that childhood indoctrination into prejudice, hatred and the ways of terrorism has devastating effects. Indoctrination and incitement to violence is, regrettably, all too common in some areas in my region. More attention should be paid to this practice in the Special Representative's reports, and they should clearly and unequivocally condemn all such exploitation.

Israel follows with interest the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who is a tireless advocate for children. Certain aspects of her work, however, deserve to be examined more carefully, especially those aspects in the reports which rely heavily on unsubstantiated allegations and which lack supporting detail. The practice is so extensive as to cast a shadow over these reports, and it does a general disservice to the cause of children and armed conflict. We urge the Office of the Special Representative to give greater attention to the invaluable process of carefully documenting and vetting the various sources of the information it receives.

Israel believes that more intensive work should be done to ensure the long-term effectiveness of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. After intensive investment of resources to help stabilize a post-conflict situation, viable alternatives to violence need to be put in place as quickly as possible. These efforts must also be sustained until reintegration has been achieved. The

longer children languish in camps or, worse, continue to be compelled to take part in violence, the dimmer the prospects are for their effective reintegration, and formal education may never resume. Time is of the essence for preventing armed conflicts, but also for protecting individual children. To this end, a candid assessment of the Working Group's impact on various situations should be carried out in order to arrive at best practices.

Israel recognizes the work of all individuals and organizations dedicated to protecting children. Often, their work is carried out under very difficult circumstances, and their efforts deserve our unwavering support. We should seize this opportunity to reach international consensus on the issues of concern and together improve the situation for children in armed conflict around the globe.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Mr. Morejón (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his clear and detailed report on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158), which takes stock of the activities undertaken and progress achieved on this important issue. Very significant results have been attained, especially since 1999, when the issue of children affected by war became an official part of the Security Council's agenda. Since then, a number of resolutions have been adopted, setting out specific measures to improve the situation of children suffering under this scourge. As the report notes, there is no doubt that the provisions of the various relevant international instruments constitute a large, solid body of international law that will enable the international community to continue its work to defend children affected by armed conflict.

It is essential that international instruments be strengthened, extended and effectively applied in order to guarantee the necessary protection for children, especially given the persistence of conflicts of all kinds throughout the world. We support the Secretary-General's valuable initiatives in that regard, as well as the commitments undertaken by several countries to ensure the well-being and protection of children in armed conflict and to fully sensitize the authorities and civil society to their situation.

One of the saddest and tragic realities we have seen in various regions of the world is the deep suffering of children exposed to armed conflict. That intolerable reality — including the threats to children posed by murder, being orphaned, mutilation, abduction, lack of education and health care, and deep physical and psychological trauma, as well as the grave situation of refugee and displaced children exposed to violence, recruitment, sexual exploitation, disease, malnutrition and death — is reflected in the Secretary-General's reports.

The issue of refugees is of particular concern to my country. Since 2000, the number of displaced persons seeking refuge in Ecuador has grown at an unprecedented rate. Ecuador is host to the greatest number of persons in need of international protection in the entire western hemisphere. Protecting those thousands of people, including children who have been direct participants in armed conflict, is a priority of my Government's international policy.

Faced with this difficult humanitarian situation, the State of Ecuador has assumed, in the context of full respect for human rights and with a thorough sense of responsibility and solidarity, the commitment to protect refugees under several international instruments to which it is party. Since 2000, my Government has undertaken legal and institutional reforms to develop a system aimed ultimately at providing a flexible and effective response to the needs of those people, especially children and adolescents. The new State policy, implemented in particular in the border regions, seeks to encourage comprehensive economic and social development and to promote zones of peace.

My delegation also wishes particularly to stress the impact on children of the illegal traffic in small arms and light weapons, landmines, cluster munitions and unexploded ordinance. That is why my country co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 63/240, adopted in December 2008, establishing an open-ended working group to consider elements of a possible arms trade treaty.

With regard to the problem of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, Ecuador believes that allowing children to take up arms and enter the vortex of violence, confrontation and destruction is inhuman and contradicts the highest values of all societies. The progress that has been made in eliminating the recruitment of child soldiers is considerable, but there is still a long way to go and there are many challenges to face.

In such circumstances, the international community must give priority attention to the situation by applying more specific measures to guarantee the most fundamental rights of children and to mitigate and prevent the gravest effects of conflict and violence on children. Ecuador wishes to express its full support for all initiatives to take concrete measures against that scourge.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I call on the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the delegation of Mexico for convening this timely debate on civilians in armed conflict. Uruguay is pleased that the issue of children affected by armed conflict has been enjoying increasing priority on the international agenda, and will continue to support all efforts in that regard.

We welcome the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. Uruguay fully supports her work and mandate. Her substantive briefings, developed in a framework of broad consultations, allow us to assess progress to date and reaffirm our conviction that much work remains to be done.

Despite the achievements of recent years, the figures contained in the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2009/158) on the impact of armed conflict on children are of particular concern. The issue is inscribed on the agenda of the General Assembly, where my country has played an extremely active role year after year in strengthening and expanding the involvement and responsibility of that organ of universal membership with respect to an issue that falls within its mandate and is of concern to all.

Nevertheless, Uruguay recognizes the role that the Security Council has played, particularly through the adoption of numerous resolutions, the most recent of which — resolution 1612 (2005) — established a monitoring and reporting mechanism in order to receive reliable information and take specific action to put a halt to the illegal recruitment and use of children in conflict zones. With respect to resolution 1612 (2005), we believe that it is necessary to assess not only the implementation, but also the format of the mechanism. We remain concerned by the fact that, even when reports continue to highlight six types of grave violations against children, the mechanism is triggered only by the illegal recruitment and use of child soldiers.

In that regard, we reiterate our support for the recommendation that the mechanism's scope be extended, as we do not believe that certain violations are more serious than others. All must be accorded the same priority. We understand that extending the trigger would call for the careful discussion of each category within existing legal frameworks. We feel that a focus on step-by-step, progressive inclusion would be more practical and operative.

In that respect, we recognize the contribution of the International Criminal Court, which designates as war crimes sexual violence and the recruitment or enlisting of children under the age of 15 or their active use in armed conflict. We also appreciate the contributions of other international courts that have included the protection of children in their respective jurisdictions. We understand that it is critical to fight tirelessly against the impunity of those responsible for grave violations of children's rights, in clear contravention of relevant international norms. In that regard, we encourage the Security Council to refer such cases to the International Criminal Court.

My delegation believes that greater attention should be given to the reintegration into society of children who are linked to armed groups or victims of other grave violations of their rights, in particular sexual abuse or exploitation. We agree with the Special Representative on the critical importance of effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes to the well-being of all children affected by armed conflict. Such efforts should enjoy adequate human and financial resources and be community-based in order to facilitate the sustainable and successful reintegration of these children.

The social reintegration of children also requires the careful consideration of cases of minors accused of crimes committed during their association with armed forces or groups. We agree that, in such cases, children must be seen, first and foremost, as victims and dealt with in accordance with international legislation within the framework of a legal system for children that leads to their social rehabilitation.

We appreciate the work of civil society in conjunction with the entire United Nations system, including the Office of the Special Representative, UNICEF child-protection advisers and the peace

mission personnel, in building sustainable mechanisms for child protection.

Uruguay, one of the 10 largest troop contributors, has demonstrated on the ground its unwavering commitment to the protection of the civilian population in general and of children in particular. In this sense, we support the recommendation to include specific provisions for the protection of children in all peacekeeping operations.

Our country has witnessed the successes and the difficulties of this project. Our troops have participated in successful programmes in coordination with the child protection advisers, but have also endured the difficulties in implementing mandates that, while sound on paper, do not have enough human and material resources in practice.

It is thus indispensable that Security Council mandates, when incorporating specific provisions to protect children, include the strategic and logistical measures needed to best fulfil these tasks. Uruguay once again stands ready to contribute to responding to this challenge through its experience on the ground.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Terzi (Italy): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you personally and thank the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Ms. Patricia Espinosa Cantallano, for her initiative and for that of the Mexican presidency of the Security Council to convene this open debate on children and armed conflicts and for chairing the Security Council's meeting today. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General, Under-Secretary-General Le Roy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy and Ms. Veneman for their important statements today.

In taking the floor, I would like to subscribe to the statement delivered by the representative of the Czech Republic in his capacity as the Presidency of the European Union.

The protection of children's rights during armed conflicts is one of Italy's top national priorities, as we indicated when we were elected to the Human Rights Council in 2007. During our 2007-2008 term on the Security Council, this same commitment inspired us to make an active contribution, proposing the insertion of child-protection provisions into United Nations mission mandates from Côte d'Ivoire to the Sudan and Afghanistan. We are glad that this proposal has now become standard practice, whenever a mandate is established or renewed by the Security Council.

I wish to pay tribute to Ambassador Ripert, the outgoing Chair of the Security Council Working Group, for the leadership and contribution that France has provided in pushing forward the United Nations agenda for children in armed conflicts. Let me also congratulate Ambassador Heller for taking over this task.

We have been moved by the testimony of Grace Akallo in the Council today. She is an example of resilience, and the account she made of the heroism of Sister Rachele witnesses to the fact that individual actions and strongly felt values can make a difference.

Italy welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) and endorses its recommendations. In particular, we support the Secretary-General's proposal to extend the trigger for the Council's action to include sexual violence. The Security Council's adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), which we co-sponsored, acknowledges that, today, sexual violence is one of the primary threats to children in situations of armed conflict.

Placing this violation among the criteria for inclusion in the reports of the Secretary-General would be another major step forward in the Council's action against this appalling crime and a signal that the Council is listening to the voices of children who have been its victims.

We also share the report's emphasis on action plans, whose significant results have been the release and reintegration of child soldiers in countries where parties to conflicts have agreed to detailed and time-bound commitments.

The 83 child-protection advisers on United Nations missions perform essential duties. As a main contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations, my country is ready to actively support United Nations action to strengthen the training of United Nations mission personnel in this area, and welcomes the efforts in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to draft common guidelines. In the development of strategies for the protection of children, their participation is another priority. We must listen to their voices. To further encourage child participation and

protection, my Government has organized — together with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNICEF, and Save the Children — a high-level event in Rome in late June this year. The participants will include several former child soldiers and youth advocates from the Network of Young People Affected by War.

Impunity remains a major issue, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) has a key role to play. We recall that the very first arrest warrant the Court issued concerned the recruitment of child soldiers. The Security Council and its Working Group should look into ways to develop practical cooperation with the ICC in fighting impunity. The first step is for the Security Council to impose targeted measures on offenders, as contemplated by resolution 1612 (2005).

Given the role of the United Nations in addressing the plight of children in armed conflict, we believe there is an urgent need for the Security Council to start working on a new resolution that would allow us to incorporate the lessons learned and the developments ensuing from the approval of resolution 1612 (2005).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Mr. President, first of all, I would like to thank you for organizing this important debate.

My delegation takes due note of the Secretary-General's latest report on children and armed conflict. We believe the recommendations therein merit careful consideration and subsequent implementation and compliance by Member States and parties to conflicts.

We commend the Security Council and its Working Group for their continued efforts to end violations against children in armed conflict. These initiatives have yielded significant and tangible successes. Several listed parties to armed conflict have adopted action plans to end their recruitment or use of child soldiers. Some have ended the practice. Others are engaged in active dialogue with United Nations, with the aim of being de-listed.

It is encouraging that the Council's monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations of children's rights has been established in all the situations of armed conflict listed in both the annexes to the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158). The United Nations system-wide response to this issue is also laudable. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, deserves our particular praise for her dedicated efforts in this regard.

The context of armed conflict has changed dramatically over the years. Diverse forms of political and armed violence have presented new threats to the protection of children. These emerging concerns necessitate prioritized and specific actions, as well as a visionary and forward-looking approach.

As society breaks down during conflict, many children perceive armed groups as their best chance for survival. While some are coerced, some join armed groups to escape poverty, while others do so out of desperation to avenge the killing of family members. Therefore, success in ending children's involvement in armed conflicts ultimately depends on addressing the root causes of motivation and on building societies where the rights and dignity of all children are upheld.

Despite all the successes, the pace of progress is still slow and its impact is not yet felt by the tens of thousands of children in the ranks of fighting forces. While progress has been made through action plans to release child soldiers in several situations of concern, the overall situation of children in armed conflict remains grave. Peace remains the main hope for securing the release of child soldiers from armed forces and groups. While we appreciate the gradual expansion of child protection provisions in the peacekeeping missions, we would therefore like to see such provisions made an integral part of the mandate of all ongoing and future peacekeeping and political missions. The Peacebuilding Commission has to ensure that children's protection, demobilization and reintegration needs are addressed in the initial planning and implementation of peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations.

We are of the view that the Security Council's current framework to protect children from armed conflicts should give equal consideration to all six mandated grave violations. The application of the monitoring and reporting mechanism should also be expanded to include all situations of concern identified in both annexes of the Secretary-General's report. A thorough evaluation of the action plans and of the monitoring and reporting mechanism would be helpful to ensure their effectiveness.

Some kind of enforcement criteria could be contemplated to make parties listed in the annexes, particularly the persistent violators, comply fully with the action plans in a time-bound manner. The issues of children under foreign occupation need to be appropriately addressed. Dialogue with all parties to conflict, including non-State actors, is crucial to developing a workable action plan. We encourage the Working Group to utilize the full range of actions identified in its toolkit. The increasing time lag between considering reports and issuing conclusions, however, needs to be addressed.

Member States have to put in place durable protection mechanisms to prevent child recruitment and other abuses against children at the national and local levels. At the same time, national and international justice systems have to take stronger action to end impunity for crimes against children within their jurisdictions.

We have a rich body indeed of international instruments for the protection of children in armed conflict, but the task ahead is also uphill. Our challenge is to ensure that this framework is used to maximum effect. This will require well-coordinated and multipronged actions by a wide range of actors, and sustained funding to rehabilitate and reintegrate returning child soldiers and other war-affected children into society. We would urge the Security Council to build on the gains achieved so far and address the existing gaps in the current system. To secure a better future for the world, we have to protect our posterity from the scourges of war and armed conflict. We simply cannot afford to be slacking in our endeavour.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Ghana.

Mr. Yankey (Ghana): I wish to commend the delegation of Mexico for organizing this open debate on children and armed conflict during your presidency, Sir. I welcome the opportunity to participate in this meeting.

Ghana will continue to support the Security Council's efforts to protect children in situations of armed conflict, be they combatants or displaced, orphans or victims of sexual violence. We believe that the dehumanization and brutalization of such children do not augur well for the long-term stability and advancement of society in general. In this connection, we are grateful to the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their statements this morning. We applaud them for their determined efforts to achieve the objectives outlined in resolution 1612 (2005).

To Ms. Grace Akallo, we wish to express our admiration for her courage. Her dramatic personal testimony put a human face on a tragedy that often seems remote, but is in fact closer to us in many ways that might not be apparent. We also extend a hand of solidarity to countless other unlucky child victims who are caught up in the whirlwinds of violence and destabilization all over the world, and particularly in Africa.

Ghana welcomes the substantial progress that has been made in developing strategies and mechanisms to curb the abuse and exploitation of children in conflict situations. The monitoring and reporting mechanisms that are now in place have facilitated the exposure of grave violations of the rights of children in those unfortunate circumstances. We trust that the Security Council will respond appropriately.

Despite the substantial gains that have been reported, formidable problems persist. The recruitment, abuse, torture and exploitation of children are still commonplace among armed groups. We strongly condemn the perpetration of widespread and systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, which have become the ugly characteristics of several ongoing conflicts. The rampant impunity with which these crimes are committed has emboldened the perpetrators to defy the authority of the Security Council and the will of the international community. Consequently, Ghana endorses the call by the Secretary-General for the expansion of the monitoring and reporting mechanism trigger to include rape and other grave forms of sexual violence.

As we consider the next constructive steps forward, we wish to highlight, among others, the following points.

There is a need for increased focus on prevention to ensure that children are protected against current and future recruitment and exploitation as soldiers. We call for legal safeguards to prohibit children under the age of 18 from being deployed in armed conflict. The root causes of recruitment invariably lie in poor governance and its effects, including human rights abuses, which

create a fertile ground for child recruitment. Related to this are the cultural and economic factors that encourage child recruitment.

The demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers remains a significant challenge, especially where gainful employment is not easily available. This brings to the fore the issue of development, especially in the health and education sectors. Comprehensive donor support for the demobilization efforts of affected Governments is thus imperative, if the incidence of the recycling of child soldiers within conflict areas is to be curbed. Existing international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, contain much of what is required to offer adequate protection to children. Those instruments need to be supplemented with vigorous implementation of existing mandates.

In conclusion, further efforts and better coordinated actions are needed to advance this process, which started a decade ago, to eliminate the recruitment and exploitation of child soldiers. Such efforts must take into account new and appalling trends, including such atrocities as the killing and maiming of children, rape and other forms of grave sexual violence, abductions, attacks against schools or hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access to children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Frommelt (Liechtenstein): We thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this important and timely debate. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) and commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her team for their dedicated work.

The increasingly dire humanitarian situation in northern Sri Lanka is alarming. Civilians, including many children, are trapped in the conflict zone. Liechtenstein calls on both of the parties to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law and to facilitate unhindered access to those facing life-threatening shortages of food, water and medical supplies.

The monitoring and reporting mechanism on serious violations of the rights of the child and the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict have brought about tangible progress in advancing the protection of children affected by armed conflicts. The decision to de-list various situations from the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General demonstrates that the mechanism established by resolution 1612 (2005) has already had a positive effect on the ground. Taking into account the recent progress made in the various areas of civilian protection, in particular with regard to resolution 1820 (2008), we believe it is time to acknowledge the clear linkage between resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1612 (2005) and to further develop both agendas in a holistic manner.

In accordance with resolution 1612 (2005), the monitoring and reporting mechanism provides reliable information on the situations listed in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, rape and other forms of grave sexual violence against children, the killing and maiming of children, the abduction of children, the denial of humanitarian access and attacks on schools and hospitals. However, only one out of those six grave violations — the recruitment and use of child soldiers — currently triggers the inclusion of countries in the agenda of the Security Council, in annex I of the Secretary-General's report. We believe that the protection of children could be significantly enhanced if a new resolution were to expand the criteria triggering the mechanism to include all six grave violations against children.

While acknowledging the equal weight of all grave violations, we believe that the expansion would best be done step by step, beginning with sexual violence, as the most pressing issue. With a view to further strengthening the monitoring and reporting mechanism, we welcome the information provided by non-governmental organizations and call for the inclusion of child-protection advisers in all peacekeeping missions and, where appropriate, political missions. In order to prepare and develop an action plan that will lead to de-listing, the States concerned should allow direct contacts between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and relevant non-State actors.

The fight against impunity is an essential part of our efforts to improve the safety and security of these children. Holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes has already proved to have a deterrent effect. While it needs to be emphasized that such

accountability should take place in national judiciaries, the Security Council must also be mindful of its competence to refer to the International Criminal Court, for investigation and prosecution, violations of children's rights falling within the Court's jurisdiction. Any measures taken by the Working Group in response to grave violations of children's rights must be complemented by effective enforcement mechanisms and measures, such as sanctions, arms embargoes and bans on military assistance, as well as the imposition of travel restrictions.

As a member of the Group of Friends of Children and Armed Conflict, Liechtenstein will continue to be active in this context. We hope that this open debate will serve as a crucial step towards a new resolution that will expand the monitoring and reporting mechanism.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Peru.

Mr. Chávez (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for your initiative to convene this open debate on a topic to which my country attaches great importance: the participation of children in armed conflicts. We particularly thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Mr. Le Roy and Ms. Veneman for their briefings and for the valuable information provided. We also thank Ms. Grace Akallo for her brave testimony, which strengthens our conviction that armed conflict is a circumstance in which children require redoubled and concerted attention.

In that respect, my country believes, as the Secretary-General indicates in his recommendations, that the Security Council should accord equal attention to all children affected by armed conflict, wherever it may occur. Under no circumstances is the abduction, recruitment for criminal purposes, sexual violation, mutilation or death of children acceptable; neither are attacks against schools or camps for refugees or displaced persons.

Peru reiterates its condemnation of all acts of violence, in particular the intentional and repeated sexual violation and rape of minors, especially girls, as weapons of war for parties to armed conflict. The Security Council should consider the Secretary-General's request that parties committing acts of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict be included in the annexes to his report.

Likewise, it is essential that resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1820 (2008) be mutually reinforcing in order to prevent and combat sexual violence in conflict situations. Mechanisms permitting United Nations agencies to exchange reliable information on acts of sexual violence in order to reduce and combat that scourge should also be explored. For its part, the Security Council should continue using or expanding its use of the instruments and means at its disposal to stop violations of children's rights in conflict situations.

Resolution 1612 (2005), together with all previous resolutions on this subject, has provided a formal and detailed framework for promoting the protection of children affected by armed conflict, as well as key elements aimed at ensuring respect for children's rights on the ground. Peru calls on the parties to armed conflicts to commit themselves to respecting children's rights.

At the same time, we must continue the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), particularly when it comes to formulating specific action plans with precise timetables to put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. In that respect, we should consider new modalities for cooperation among the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, sanctions committees and groups of experts in order to take the measures necessary to ensure the safety of children. In addition, the Security Council should continue taking specific measures to protect children in peacekeeping operations and political missions.

As rightly indicated in the Secretary-General's report, given the regional dimension of many conflicts, field-deployed operations can help establish coordination mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection. Member States, especially those affected by armed conflict, must also, within the framework of their legal systems, continue to implement or adopt measures to identify those responsible for the illegal recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and other grave violations of children's rights, and apply the necessary sanctions. Neither amnesty nor impunity is acceptable.

The establishment of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is proof of the Security Council's increasing commitment to protecting children. I must highlight the successful work done by France as chairman of the Working Group, and I can

assure Mexico of our support in its work as the new Chairman.

It is also appropriate to highlight the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Since field visits are an essential part of the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005), it is only right for her Office to have the necessary logistic and budgetary support to fully perform its functions. The same can be said of the important work carried out by UNICEF, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other relevant bodies in this area. We call on States and all parties to conflicts to cooperate with these bodies. We also call on the donor community to support the efforts to reintegrate and demobilize child soldiers being made in some countries.

The progressive development of international humanitarian law has provided us with the legal instruments needed to fight against the use of children in armed conflict, protect them and ensure their security in times of violence. States and the international community therefore have the great responsibility of ensuring that this is done. Not only do current peace and stability depend on compliance, but so does the building of peaceful, stable societies in the future.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mr. Paudel (Nepal): Thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict. We are confident that this debate will assess the magnitude of the problem from wider perspectives and help consolidate international cooperation for the implementation of our shared commitments.

We appreciate the thoughtful statement by the Secretary-General in the Council this morning. We also appreciate the presentations by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her role in this issue. We commend Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy and UNICEF Executive Director Ann Veneman for their presentations. We were very much moved by the descriptions of Ms. Grace Akallo on the plight of child soldiers.

The international community has rightfully been devoting its attention to the issue of children and armed conflict for several years. In addition to the generic conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there are other international instruments, commitments and principles devised to protect the rights of the child. In line with that, we appreciate the initiatives of the Security Council in adopting various resolutions, including resolution 1612 (2005), for the protection and promotion of the rights of children affected by armed conflict.

Children are the most vulnerable sector of the population in times of conflict. They are easily used and abused, as they are incapable of judging what is right and wrong for themselves. Governments, the international community and civil society must come up with rapid, effective and coordinated efforts to prevent heinous crimes against children during conflict. To that end, our great commitments must be matched with adequate human and financial resources on the ground to monitor the situation, rescue the victims and bring the violators to justice.

There is a clear need for time-bound and tailor-made action plans for rescuing the victims and for their reintegration into their family and society in the aftermath of conflict. We clearly see the need for a comprehensive approach linked with overall development policies for the sustained promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

Since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006, Nepal has travelled quite a distance in its historic political transformation. For the first time, people are writing their Constitution, through their elected representatives in the Constituent Assembly. Writing a new Constitution and guiding the peace process to its logical conclusion are the two fundamental tasks ahead of this Government. The Government of Nepal is committed to fulfilling these historic responsibilities with the consensus of political parties and stakeholders.

Nepal, as a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has devised the necessary legal instruments and established a legal and administrative framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The Government of Nepal reiterates its commitment to releasing combatants who are minors, ending impunity for crimes against children and protecting children from sexual violence and other grave crimes against them, in the spirit of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, as children are the

foundation of the peaceful and prosperous future of our country.

The Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction has taken the lead role in the release, reintegration and rehabilitation of combatants who are minors on the basis of the broad consensus of the Army Integration Special Committee and its Technical Committee. To this end, the Government of Nepal would welcome cooperation from United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Mission in Nepal, for the early release and reintegration of combatants who are minors.

Allow me to share with the Council the fact that the Government of Nepal has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) in an overall positive manner and expresses its readiness to work in collaboration with the international community. The Government of Nepal is determined to carry out its responsibilities in the protection and promotion of children affected by armed conflict, in line with resolution 1612 (2005).

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Ney (Germany): Germany fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

Allow me to start by wishing you, Mr. President, all the best in your new function as the Chairman of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. My particular thanks also goes to France, as the outgoing chair, for its important and crucial contribution during the first formative years of the Working Group.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict for their dedicated engagement in taking this important issue forward. Finally, allow me to thank the staff of UNICEF and all other United Nations agencies participating in the monitoring and reporting mechanism for their valuable contributions.

Germany attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of the child and, in particular, to the situation of children in armed conflict. I am proud to say that Germany is one of the main donors in this field, both bilaterally and multilaterally. We welcome the recent report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158) and fully endorse the recommendations contained therein. At the same time, we are acutely aware that the United Nations child protection framework for children in armed conflict needs further strengthening.

The international community has come a long way in dealing with the issue of the protection of children in armed conflicts since it was first included on the agenda of the Security Council in 1998. Resolution 1612 (2005) is rightfully regarded as a milestone, as it created an effective international monitoring and reporting mechanism for children and armed conflict and a Working Group to provide follow-up to those reports.

Progress so far shows that the mechanism is working. It provides Member States with evidence of grave violations being committed against children in armed conflict, in particular concerning the illegal recruitment and use of children as soldiers.

At the same time, the naming and shaming of perpetrators in the reports of the Secretary-General seems to have a real impact on the ground, as some parties to conflict enter into dialogue with United Nations country-level task forces or even adopt and implement time-bound action plans to address the grave violations for which they have been cited. This is no small achievement, given that these violations are often perpetrated in a rule of law vacuum.

However, in our view, the impact of the United Nations child protection framework on the ground in situations of armed conflict is not as decisive as it could and should be. Important challenges remain. The international community must not watch and keep silent in the face of deteriorating conflict situations, like the one we are currently witnessing in Sri Lanka, affecting children in particular. An immediate humanitarian ceasefire is imperative in Sri Lanka to allow for a United Nations-assisted evacuation of those still trapped in the conflict zone, among them many children.

Let me highlight three points to address the challenges that I have mentioned. First, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children remain widespread in many armed conflicts and are exacerbated by a culture of impunity. Germany therefore welcomes and fully endorses the proposal made by the Secretary-General to expand the so-called trigger for the listing of perpetrators in the annex of the

annual report to also include cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children in armed conflict. In that regard, Germany calls upon the Security Council to take appropriate steps as a matter of urgency. Synergies with other protection agendas, especially on sexual violence against women and children in situations of armed conflict, as set forth in Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), should be realized, for example with regard to data sharing.

Secondly, in our view, it is essential that the threat of forceful Security Council follow-up to reported violations against children remain credible. Regrettably, 19 of the approximately 60 armed groups listed by the Secretary-General in this year's report are persistent perpetrators which have been repeatedly listed for at least four years. We call upon the Security Council to consider strong and urgent measures, including targeted sanctions or referrals to the International Criminal Court where appropriate, against those parties that persistently ignore calls by the Security Council Working Group to cease their illegal practices with regard to children in armed conflict. What we need is more systematic communication between the Security Council Working Group and the relevant sanctions committees.

And thirdly, the Security Council should remain fully engaged in mainstreaming the issue of children in armed conflict into all United Nations peacekeeping and political operations. In that regard, we welcome the deployment of an increasing number of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations and the conceptual work on a policy directive in this field currently being finalized by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

Let me conclude by reiterating our full support for the analysis and recommendations of the report of the Secretary-General and our firm commitment to join hands with all those striving to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict worldwide.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Loulichki (Morocco) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mexico on its productive presidency of the Security Council for the month of April and to express our satisfaction in seeing Mexico follow France as Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Morocco, along with the rest of the international community, expresses its thanks for the laudable efforts of the Mexican authorities in responding to the current influenza challenge from its onset. Morocco expresses its solidarity with the people and Government of Mexico in confronting this pandemic challenge.

(*spoke in French*)

Let me also thank you, Sir, for organizing the debate, the importance of which was marvellously illustrated by the poignant and moving testimony of Ms. Grace Akallo.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for the quality of his report (S/2009/158) and the strength of his commitment. Our thanks go as well to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their efforts to protect children.

Statistics are implacable: more than 2 million children dead, 6 million disabled and 22 million displaced. When they are not reduced to the status of sex slaves or indoctrinated refugees, young boys and girls whose fundamental rights are being violated for the sake of war are living through atrocities and are completely deprived of the real meaning of childhood. We all vividly recall the suffering endured by the children of Gaza, who are confronted by the logic of war, with all its consequences on their psychological state and their daily lives.

The experiences of terror and deprivation to which children are subjected in conflict situations — where children are systematically recruited by armed groups and where they are killed, maimed, abducted and subjected to violence — are shocking. That is why the Council's increasing attention to children's issues is entirely justified. The specific resolutions on the subject adopted by the Council in the past 10 years, which have given rise to the establishment of important mechanisms, have certainly made significant progress possible. That progress includes the creation of monitoring and reporting mechanisms, the implementation of specific action plans and the total or partial release of children associated with armed groups in specific situations.

Still, it must be recognized that progress remains limited. Thus, the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, have a necessary role to play in promoting national measures aimed at strengthening

the protection of children and effective implementation of demobilization and reintegration programmes and the establishment of socio-economic conditions that discourage recruitment.

There is no disagreement that the responsibility for putting an end to child recruitment lies first and foremost with States. However, specialized institutions such as the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization and UNICEF must strengthen their initiatives and coordinate their actions with the Working Group, so as to define a strategy to help those countries resolve their problems. The approach must be preventive as well as responsive in addressing the tragic consequences of conflicts. Attacking the root causes of armed conflict is vital in order to prevent all involvement of children.

Morocco is a party to the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and is prepared to associate itself with all international efforts to curb the terrible tragedy of the involvement of children in armed conflict.

In that spirit, my country reiterates its support for the Paris Principles, which are aimed at protecting children against illegal recruitment in armed conflict and affording them appropriate reintegration in a protective environment. We hope that the Paris commitments will enable us to advance towards a more inclusive approach, agreed upon by the international community, on the importance of education programmes for the prevention of recruitment, so that all child soldiers can benefit from suitable reintegration and rehabilitation programmes. The commitment of Governments is essential to implement the Paris Principles for the protection of children in armed conflict situations and to achieve the final and unconditional release of child soldiers before the conclusion of peace agreements.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, allow me, Mr. President, to express our solidarity with the Government and people of Mexico on account of the outbreak of influenza that has taken so many lives and has affected not only your country but others on the planet. We feel solidarity with Mexicans.

We also thank Mexico, in exercising the presidency of the Council during the present month, for having convened us to discuss children and armed conflict. We are pleased to have had the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Patricia Espinosa Cantellano, with us. That highlights not only the importance that Mexico attributes to the matter, but also its active commitment to advance the fight against the many atrocities committed against boys and girls in situations of conflict. We also appreciate the report on this matter presented to us by the Secretariat.

Almost twenty years have transpired since the Council first took notice of the fate of children in areas of conflict, and ten years since resolution 1261 (1999) was adopted — the Council's first resolution dealing with children and armed conflict. The results since the adoption of that resolution, which was followed by six others in the intervening years, have been decidedly mixed. In spite of some progress achieved — thanks in great part to the initiatives taken by the United Nations — we have also been witness to changes in the tactics of war by which the civilian population has become even more exposed to a spiral of violence and to new threats to boys and, especially, girls.

We believe that the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005) in July of 2005 was an important achievement in offering a conceptual framework that helps strengthen the protection of children who are victims of conflicts. In particular, we must devote all our attention to the social disintegration caused by gender-based violence and displacements, as well as the brutal violence and sexual slavery to which girls are subjected, and to the resulting stigmatization in their communities.

Guatemala has actively participated, in the framework of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, in the matter related to the progress made in including questions regarding children and armed conflict in United Nations political missions and peacekeeping operations. We hope that the Department of Peacekeeping Operations will finalize its policy directive on mainstreaming the protection of children affected by armed conflicts in peacekeeping activities, as requested by the Special Committee since 2008. This policy will also provide directions on the role and functions of child protection advisers and will outline the policy framework for their activities, further defining their cooperation, coordination and

consultation with other key child protection actors in the field.

We support the recommendation that, when appropriate, specific child protection provisions should be included in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and the deployment, on a case-by-case basis, of child protection advisers should be foreseen in those operations. However, we believe that the Department must more precisely define the role and responsibilities of these advisers and strengthen the mechanisms and oversight arrangements to curb sexual violence, as well as outline clear modalities for cooperation with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

We praise the designation of a coordinator or focal point to liaise with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, within their respective mandates. However, we reiterate our concern about the delay in the appointment of a person to assume that latter post.

My delegation would like to stress the importance of training on child protection matters for peacekeeping contingents in the field, since the effectiveness of our work is measured in the timely execution of programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of boys and girls in their communities or in the society. Those programmes must receive more resources so that they become sustainable in the long term.

Finally, I would like to refer to children accused of illicit activities carried out during their affiliation with armed forces or groups. They should be treated as victims, in accordance with international law, in the context of restitution and rehabilitative justice.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I next give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Ayoob (Afghanistan): As Ambassador Tanin is in Havana to lead the Afghan delegation at the Ministerial Meeting of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, I have the honour to participate in this meeting and to deliver, on his behalf and on behalf of the delegation of Afghanistan, a statement on the subject under the Council's consideration, a subject that is very important for my country.

We thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's important debate to discuss the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158) and for chairing of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The presence of Her Excellency the Foreign Minister of Mexico at our meeting this morning reflects the level of the commitment of your delegation and the effectiveness of its work on this issue.

We welcome Mrs. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and thank her for her insightful briefing this morning. We also commend her Office for its continuing efforts to protect children affected by armed conflict. We welcome the recent establishment of the monitoring and reporting mechanism in Afghanistan.

My delegation was deeply touched by the testimony this morning of Grace Akallo, who spoke as a former child soldier. We sincerely commend her courage and strength.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. In November 2008, the Secretary-General's country-specific report on children and armed conflict in Afghanistan provided us with an initial opportunity to carry out fruitful discussion with our partners in the Security Council Working Group on ways and means to better implement resolution 1612 (2005) in the challenging environment of Afghanistan.

For this debate to continue effectively, we must recognize two facts: that the chief threat to children in Afghanistan is terrorism, and that to overcome that threat the international community and the Government of Afghanistan must work together.

First, terrorism drastically affects the daily lives of our people, particularly children. The deterioration of the security situation in Afghanistan is the product of the surge of terrorist activities carried out by Al-Qaida, the Taliban and other associated terrorist and armed groups. It is the Taliban and other terrorist groups that have been and remain the main violators of human rights, including children's rights, in Afghanistan, and those violations will continue as long as the security situation does not improve.

Terrorists have increased attacks in our territory, employing barbaric methods imported from outside

Afghanistan, including the use of car bombs, suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices. These attacks deliberately target heavily populated areas, where children are the prime victims. Terrorists are recruiting, training and exploiting children as combatants and sending them to operate as suicide bombers. The intensification of the Taliban intimidation campaign, accomplished through the burning of schools, the destruction of health care centres and clinics and attacks on female teachers and schoolchildren, has created an atmosphere of terror which prevents our children from accessing basic Government services. The recent acid attack on a group of schoolgirls was a horrific demonstration of the particular vulnerability of girls.

The reported cases of alleged recruitment, detention and sexual violence by individuals in the Afghan Government or the National Army and Police are disturbing to us, but they are isolated cases. For its part, the Government of Afghanistan is deeply committed to fully implementing resolution 1612 (2005) and to protecting the rights of children through all possible means and mechanisms.

Afghanistan has developed domestic laws relating to children, established juvenile judicial institutions and ratified most of the international human rights treaties including, in 2002, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. Our penal code prohibits sexual violence against children and prohibits the recruitment of persons below 18 in our National Police and below 22 in our National Army. According to our juvenile code, the legal age of criminal responsibility for a child is 12 years of age; children can be prosecuted and sentenced only by a juvenile court and can be confined only in a juvenile detention centre. Afghan national legislation, particularly a recent law on combating terrorist offences, strictly prohibits the detention of children in adult prisons even if a child is accused of terrorism or threats to national security.

We recognize the importance of governance and the rule of law to improving and better implementing all those legal provisions. We are making the necessary efforts in that direction; all those efforts need sustained international involvement.

In conclusion, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the international community for the military and civilian personnel serving in Afghanistan, who are assisting us in ensuring security and enabling the implementation of the rule of law, good governance and human rights, including children's rights. We are grateful for their sacrifices in our common endeavour to preserve peace and security, for their efforts to build the capacity of the Afghan people and for their recent efforts to address, with us, the issue of civilian casualties. We must continue to move together to stop terrorism's menace to civilians, in particular children.

Afghanistan has made substantial progress in ensuring the rights of children through legal frameworks and other mechanisms. However, terrorism continues to threaten the attainment of our goals. It is our hope that, with the continuing help and focus of the international community and the ongoing determination of the Afghan Government, we can improve the implementation of resolution 1612 (2005) and protect our children, as the hope for our future, to the best of our ability.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mr. Argüello (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina, at the outset, would like to thank the delegation of Mexico, which holds the presidency of the Security Council for the month of April, for its initiative in organizing today's debate. We congratulate the Mexican delegation on its efforts as Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Our thanks go to those who addressed the Security Council this morning. In particular, we listened carefully to the statement of Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for which we are most grateful. And we cannot fail to thank Ms. Grace Akallo for sharing her perspective and her experience as a former child soldier.

It is our understanding that the issue of the protection of children, in all its aspects, falls primarily within the purview of the General Assembly. In that regard, we shall continue to work to strengthen the mandates of existing mechanisms and to search for new institutional solutions. We also view most positively the progress made in the protection of children affected by armed conflict since the adoption of resolution 1612 (2005). This progress has been achieved through the joint endeavours of States and the mechanisms created by the United Nations system,

with the invaluable support of civil society organizations.

We appreciate the action taken by a number of national Governments, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158). This includes their commitment to action plans agreed upon by parties to a conflict, consistent with resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) and with international law. But a source of great concern is the widespread persistence of the abhorrent practice of recruiting child soldiers, including in cases of inadequate supervision of official practice meant to ensure that young recruits are of legal age, and of manipulating child soldiers in the context of peace negotiations.

We are also alarmed by the upsurge of violence of all kinds, including attacks that impede the exercise of the right to education and numerous recorded cases of sexual violence in a context of insecurity and impunity.

Argentina attaches great importance to the promotion and protection of the rights of children. Every State has the imperative obligation to ensure that its inhabitants fully enjoy human rights, even under the most difficult circumstances. In that regard, we are grateful for the recommendations set out in the report of the Secretary-General, which we shall study carefully. In addition to what we have said in previous debates on this item, we wish today to underscore our agreement on a number of points.

First of all, the fight against impunity and the quest for justice are at the core of any effective response aimed at preventing and eliminating human rights violations in any situation. It is therefore indispensable to make greater efforts to end impunity, including in cases of systematic and generalized sexual violence. It is imperative to ensure due process and recourse for the victims to adequate legal remedies, including the International Criminal Court, where applicable.

Secondly, we have listened closely to the statements of the representative of Costa Rica and other delegations, and we agree with what they said. We consider that the deliberations of the Security Council Working Group should be extended to all situations of armed conflict, where there is proof not solely of the recruitment and use of child soldiers but of any of the other five categories of grave violations, including rape and other serious sexual violence. We believe it relevant to review the criteria for inclusion in the annexes, taking all forms of violence into consideration.

Thirdly, the action plans agreed upon have proven to be a valuable tool, and we encourage the Security Council to continue urging parties to armed conflict situations to prepare and put into practice concrete action plans with definite time frames in order to end the illegal recruitment and use of children, as well as to undertake concrete commitments regarding other types of alleged violations and abuses.

Fourthly, we are convinced of the need to carry out effective programmes of demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation so that victims have a real opportunity to be reintegrated into society. For this purpose, these programmes must have sufficient funding and pragmatic and effective mechanisms to achieve sustainable results over time. We believe that that is an indispensable component for peacebuilding that must receive appropriate political attention in all relevant forums, including the Peacebuilding Commission.

In line with what I said earlier, we would like to stress the importance of the programmes initiated by some Governments with the support of the United Nations and the international community to ensure appropriate rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have been released or who have managed to leave armed groups.

Argentina reiterates its unshakeable commitment to the protection of children from all forms of violence and to continued cooperation with the Working Group and all mechanisms contributing to the promotion and protection of the rights of children in order to secure for them the potential for a childhood free from violence where their human rights can be fully enjoyed.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, we thank you for having organized this debate today. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) and thank Ms. Coomaraswamy and all other representatives of the Secretariat for their excellent work. My written text is the official text of my statement, but I would like to focus my abridged oral presentation on just a few points.

We all know that in spite of the marked interest and action by the international community, violations of law and abuses continue. A very recent example is the desperate situation of thousands of children trapped in the conflict zone in north-eastern Sri Lanka. Credible reports indicate that several hundred children have been massacred and that a number of hospitals have been targeted for attacks during the fighting of the past few months. The situation is even more worrisome because humanitarian access to these children trapped in the war zones is still severely restricted. Additionally, it has been reported that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam have intensified their use of child soldiers. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Working Group should use every available opportunity to engage the parties to the conflict so that they will improve the situation on the ground.

This situation should not let us forget other serious situations, such as those in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Myanmar, the Sudan, Somalia and other hotbeds of tension and crisis.

Generally, we call on the Security Council to use all its influence to ensure implementation of the provisions of resolution 1612 (2005), to include this question on the Council's agenda and to make better use of existing mechanisms and instruments, such as sanctions, peacekeeping missions, political missions and statements and resolutions.

We fully endorse all the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report and stress the following points. First, we support the idea of expanding the criteria that trigger the inclusion of parties to armed conflict in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General. This could be carried out using an incremental approach, starting with the intentional killing and maiming of children and concluding with all six grave violations.

Secondly, we support the idea that all parties listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports should prepare and implement concrete action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts. The Council should take measures against any party that does not comply with its obligations.

Thirdly, the Working Group should be encouraged to report to the competent sanctions committees those parties to conflict committing repeated grave violations against children. Moreover, targeted measures should be taken against parties or individuals responsible for such violations.

Fourthly, we encourage the Security Council to defer to the International Criminal Court when appropriate regarding violations committed against children that fall within its jurisdiction.

Finally, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should receive more significant administrative support and should improve its methods of work.

The question of children and armed conflict is only one facet of the protection agenda on which the Security Council, the Secretariat, the operational system of the United Nations and all Member States should focus. Still, it is vital to monitor the implementation of decisions on the ground, including their impact on the populations concerned. Accordingly, it is imperative that, through our work at Headquarters, we develop mandates, including the terms of engagement of United Nations missions, in order to facilitate protection activities, ensure that recommendations coming from thematic debates are reflected in work on specific countries, support as much as possible protection on the ground in terms of human and financial resources, build capacity and conduct leading to good management of key dilemmas, and ensure that all stakeholders on the ground work in close cooperation on the basis of a common framework.

There are a number of financial mechanisms to support United Nations protection activities: the peacekeeping budget; the regular budget, including special political missions; the budgets of relevant United Nations agencies; and the Central Emergency Response Fund; and various other funds financed through voluntary contributions. This variety of mechanisms represents a challenge in terms of the effectiveness of planning and the strategic use of resources.

The lack of a broad view of transparency or predictability in resources is an obstacle to the effectiveness of protection activities. It is the responsibility of all of us to find appropriate solutions to resolve this problem. A common framework would contribute to improving the current situation.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Mr. Barbalić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): Mr. President, I would like to express our thanks to you for having taken the initiative to convene this open debate on children and armed conflict. This is an issue to which Bosnia and Herzegovina attaches the highest importance.

Bosnia and Herzegovina aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of the Czech Republic speaking on behalf of the European Union.

As has been described in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158), the overall situation of children affected by armed conflicts continues to be of serious concern. Children continue to suffer from the horrors of war. Recruitment by armed groups and widespread violence, including killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction and other grave crimes in war-affected countries, is daily life for thousands of children. Children also suffer from the indirect impact of war, such as the loss of their families and homes, hunger and various diseases.

Bosnia and Herzegovina considers that addressing the root causes of conflicts and adopting a comprehensive strategy, with the participation of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, such as UNICEF, regional organizations, the parties concerned and non-governmental organizations, could lead to the development of more effective tools in fighting all forms of violence against children. Bosnia and Herzegovina believes that the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict is an important body and should take more serious steps vis-à-vis all parties involved to put an end to child recruitment and to the serious violations against children. It would be more effective if the Working Group worked closely with existing sanctions committees.

The protection of children under the provisions of international humanitarian and human rights law should be carried out under the scrutiny of the States parties to the respective conventions, including the Geneva Conventions of 1949, and the obligations applicable under the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions of 1977 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989. In that regard, States parties should adopt appropriate measures at the national and international levels for the prevention of the recruitment of children and for their protection from all forms of violence. In that regard, as a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, adopted in May 2000, we join others in calling upon those countries that have not done so to accede to the Protocol.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a State party to the Rome Statute, considers that the International Criminal Court is an adequate and indispensable legal body that can take appropriate steps to investigate and prosecute crimes perpetrated against children that fall within its jurisdiction. It is the only accessible way to put an end to impunity and to prevent crimes in those cases where the judiciary system at the national level is not able to do so.

With regard to child protection advisers, their reports from the field are an indispensable tool for obtaining a comprehensive assessment that will help to learn lessons and to find the most effective solutions. Deployment of child protection advisers should be considered during the preparation of each peacekeeping operation and political mission, respectively. I would like to stress that the participation of child protection advisers in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is of the highest importance.

The Secretary-General's report recounts disturbing incidents affecting the education sector. Armed conflict is distorting education in a number of countries around the world, and children who are deprived of their right to education also remain deprived of their right to a better future.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that this open debate will contribute to the deliberations of Security Council.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I would first of all like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this debate. It shows the special interest that Mexico attaches to the issue of children in armed conflicts, as does your greatly appreciated chairing of the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/158), as well as the Special Representative, Ms. Coomaraswamy, the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Le Roy, and the Executive Director of UNICEF, Ms. Veneman, for their

briefings. I would particularly like to say how much we appreciated Grace Akallo's very poignant testimony this morning.

Belgium aligns itself with the statement that my Czech colleague delivered on behalf of the European Union. On behalf of Belgium, I would like to highlight three elements for today's debate and then to share some thoughts as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configuration on the Central African Republic.

First of all, Belgium fully supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to broaden and strengthen the mechanism of resolution 1612 (2005) so as also to include in the annexes of the reports of the Secretary-General parties in conflicts responsible for systematic sexual violence. The scourge of sexual violence is well known. The Council, through resolution 1820 (2008), has recognized that such violence, in some conflicts, is used as a weapon of war. We believe that broadening the mechanism should, first and foremost, take into consideration the criteria of sexual violence, without however prejudicing additional future broadening. That would serve as a significant step towards eradicating that most hateful violence.

Secondly, during its recent mandate in the Council, Belgium consistently emphasized the fight against impunity, whether through national or international mechanisms, such as the International Criminal Court. Today, that Court is the appropriate legal instrument for prosecuting those suspected of having committed the gravest crimes, in particular against children. I wish to recall that the Court is an adjunct to national criminal justice systems and that it is first and foremost up to those jurisdictions to act. The fight against impunity is a fundamental element for reconciliation and peace, without which children will remain the victims of serious violations. We therefore support the plea of the Secretary-General to extend the action and responsibility of the Security Council and of its sanctions regimes in order to adopt appropriate sanctions against individuals or groups that persist in recruiting and using children.

Thirdly, Belgium would like to underscore the critical importance of reintegration programmes for former child soldiers. My country therefore fully subscribed to the Paris Principles in 2007. The principal message of those guiding principles is that preventing the recruitment of child soldiers and facilitating their reintegration must be envisaged over the long term, that is through programmes spread over several years. In that regard, the international community, together with national authorities, must fulfil their responsibilities.

That prompts me to say that the issue on our agenda today exceeds the scope of the Security Council. The Peacebuilding Commission also has a very important role to play, in particular in coordinating disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and in sensitizing public opinion on the issue of child soldiers. I would like here to refer to the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, which, together with the Government of that country, has recently renewed commitments to the issue in its strategy to build peace. The Central African Republic Government now needs to ratify and to incorporate into law the relevant international conventions and protocols to prevent recruitment, but also to protect and re-integrate released children. The Central African Republic configuration is committed to heightening the awareness of national parties and international partners in order to launch appropriate programmes and mobilize long-term financial support for the children concerned.

In the process of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups, UNICEF is currently implementing a demobilization programme for child soldiers, which, under the agreement with one of the rebel groups, the Armeé Populaire pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie, should soon lead to the demobilization of 105 children. The Central African Republic configuration ensures coordination between those efforts and other disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

Finally, I would like to thank the Special Representative, Ms. Coomaraswamy, for her consistent and resolute action for children in conflicts. Belgium particularly appreciates her field visits, such as recently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or in the Central African Republic. Her presence has a real impact on the attitude of the parties to the conflict and undoubtedly contributes to stemming the suffering of children in conflicts. We greatly admire her strong ongoing commitment for the cause of children in areas of conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of El Salvador.

Mrs. Gallardo Hernández (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to sincerely congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and on having convened this open Council debate to consider the issue of children and armed conflict. It is undoubtedly a highly sensitive and very interesting topic for the international community, in particular for a country such as El Salvador, which has experienced conflict. Indeed, it is so because of its cross-cutting implications and because of the moral and political challenges that it entails in the area of peace and security. It is also important in terms of respecting and promoting the human rights of children and adolescents, relevant international law and post-conflict peacebuilding processes.

We fully agree with the Secretary-General regarding the approach and the recommendations set out in his eighth report on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158).

El Salvador attaches great importance to the issue of children and armed conflict as a matter of principle firmly established in international law related to the rights and the protection of children in armed conflicts, including, among other instruments to which my country is a State party, the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Likewise, as a post-conflict country, El Salvador recognizes the great value of the international community's efforts to put an end to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts and other grave violations committed against children affected by armed conflict.

In that context, our country considers it essential to continue to make progress in implementing the monitoring and reporting mechanism, in submitting action plans to stop the recruitment and use of children, and in mainstreaming issues related to children and armed conflict in United Nations political and peacekeeping missions.

Moreover, as amply documented by relevant bodies of the United Nations system, rape and other grave acts of sexual violence committed against children in conflict and post-conflict situations are a vital concern of the international community. Such aberrant acts are clearly used as a weapon of war, sometimes wielded to humiliate victims and subject them to the military tactics of parties to conflict, thereby forcibly displacing specific populations targeted by such acts and causing serious humanitarian crises. El Salvador recognizes the importance of eliminating such practices, which undermine the rights and the protection of children in both conflict and post-conflict situations.

In that regard, we should consider incorporating into the Organization's new international peacebuilding architecture the systematic analysis and formulation of specific recommendations for the Security Council on this issue to supplement the efforts currently being made by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

As a result of its experience in the area of peacebuilding, El Salvador believes that the protection of children's rights and the full reintegration of children into post-conflict societies are fundamental elements that must be considered and incorporated into the language of peace agreements, peacebuilding strategies and national reconciliation processes.

El Salvador welcomes the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report on children and armed conflict. In particular, we wish to highlight the importance of considering the feasibility of including in country teams, which are established pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005), officials responsible for monitoring gender-based violence. Likewise, officials concerned with the area of gender violence and the protection of children, in particular disabled children, should jointly establish modalities to share information and coordinate their activities, including in the area of access to justice and legal recourse. In addition, we should fully consider possible links between that suggestion and the Security Council's follow-up on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

Furthermore, special mention should be made of the situation, caused by armed conflict, in which children are involuntarily separated from their families. El Salvador, as a post-conflict country, has addressed that situation by establishing an inter-institutional commission to search for children who have disappeared as a result of armed conflict. The commission seeks to cooperate with public institutions involved in or responsible for child protection in finding children involuntarily separated from their

families, thus promoting family reunification based on the best interests of the child. Here, we express to Council members my country's willingness to share the experience gained by the inter-institutional commission if this is considered appropriate.

Finally, we should like to commend the excellent work done by Special Representative Coomaraswamy, to whom I pay tribute this afternoon. I also wish to reaffirm the political will of the Government of El Salvador to continue to promote measures aimed at strengthening the rule of law and democratic governance as basic tools for ensuring the effective protection of the human rights of all Salvadorans and, in particular, children in post-conflict situations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Al-Musawi (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like at the outset to express my country's appreciation for the section on Iraq contained in the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158). We very much appreciate the significant role played in that regard by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

My delegation would like to make the following comments about the report's section on Iraq. First, the report covers the year 2008, and we all know that the situation in Iraq has generally improved since then. Indeed, the last few months of 2008 and the first few months of 2009 witnessed a number of positive developments, including clear improvements in the security situation and their overall positive impact on citizens and on the performance of the Government, whose ability to meet the people's security and safety needs has obviously improved. In paragraph 43 of his most recent report on the activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (S/2009/102), covering the period December 2008 to February 2009, the Secretary-General states:

> "In recent months, Iraq witnessed gradual stabilization and further improvements in security conditions, with a lower number of violent, high-visibility, mass-casualty attacks by militias, insurgents and criminal gangs."

Secondly, the ability of terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaida, to carry out attacks has declined, and a number of terrorist leaders have been killed or have left Iraq. Moreover, Al-Qaida has lost some of its field commanders. Other leaders have left or have been arrested, which confirms that the organization has lost its capacity to control the situation on the ground and to recruit. This is the truth of the matter, as pointed out by the Secretary-General in paragraph 50 of his report (S/2009/102):

> "That the majority of these threats were not realized could be interpreted as a further sign that militia and insurgent leaders are losing influence, or that their capability and resources are being depleted."

Clearly, this organization is a foreign body, a cancer eating away at Iraqi society, and we expect that it will soon be eradicated.

The Iraqi Government has made painstaking efforts in a number of areas to ensure that all citizens, including children, will be able to enjoy their human rights, as noted in paragraph 41 of the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (S/2009/102).

However, the report does not mention the positive effect of the cooperation between the Government and the Mission, and does not fully or accurately portray the situation on the ground. The reference in the report to the presence of cases of child recruitment by militias should have been submitted to the Iraqi Government so that we could, together with the Mission, express ourselves on these points, before the inclusion of various pieces of information in the report of the Secretary-General. To this extent, the report lacks credibility, and is based on exaggerations and a lack of specificity. It is incompatible with the most recent reports submitted by the Mission on the situation in Iraq. We would hope that, in the future, in cooperation with the Mission, the Office of the Special Representative will be able to submit more specific and updated information to reflect the reality of the situation.

Additionally, in terms of strengthening and protecting the rights, safety and security of children, various measures have been taken. We have developed a law to protect Iraqi children under the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols. We are finalizing a draft piece of legislation on the establishment of a children's parliament in Iraq. We have conducted a study to ensure the rights of orphans. We have taken measures

along the border to stop the trafficking of children. We are endeavouring to reduce the phenomenon of the use of children in armed conflict. A number of programmes have been established in collaboration and coordination with UNICEF, such as one to protect children in situations of hardship, such as displaced children. We have established programmes to help children suffering from psychological traumas, with follow-up and inspection units for these children. We have promulgated a law prohibiting the use of child labour under the age of 15 or until such time as they have completed their primary education. We have also worked to include the culture of the rights of the child in school curricula, taking measures to prohibit all forms of violence against children. We have tried to ensure the protection of children from threats related to armed conflict, working in close cooperation with UNICEF and establishing specialized centres in residential neighbourhoods to monitor ongoing violations. The first centre for children traumatized by war was established with the help of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Affairs and civil society. We have also rehabilitated and rebuilt schools destroyed by conflict and war. We ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2008.

In conclusion, we would like to warmly thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We want to emphasize that it is our intention to continue to cooperate with United Nations agencies to ensure the protection of human rights and the rights of children, which is a priority for my Government.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Palihakkara (Sri Lanka): My delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on a subject that is very important to my country. Allow me to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for your very able leadership of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

In situations of armed conflict, children are the most vulnerable and deserve every form of protection possible. We are only too aware of this in Sri Lanka, as we deal with the Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) terrorism and its related violence. We appreciate the role of the Secretary-General and the valuable contribution of his Special Representative, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and her team under her mandate to address this important issue.

As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Sri Lanka has enacted progressive legislation providing for the protection of children and has established institutional mechanisms to promote and create a protective environment for them. Notwithstanding these measures taken as a State party, non-State actors continue to use innocent children for violent purposes, disregarding repeated censure on the part of the Government and, of course, of this Council.

We are conscious that the primary responsibility for the protection of children and promotion of their welfare lies with the State. It is imperative for the State to ensure that children are not in danger and to prevent them from being used as accessories to violence. We have consistently rejected in the strongest possible terms the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict as unjustifiable under all circumstances. In fact, the Council will recall that Sri Lanka voluntarily submitted to the Working Group the case of a terrorist organization, the LTTE, using children for combat. We have been steadfast in advocating that this practice stop.

Sri Lanka was among the first Member States to volunteer to set up a national task force, in accordance with resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005), to monitor and report on the activities of the LTTE. We support this Council imposing the strongest possible measures against those who perpetrate such crimes.

In this context, Sri Lanka reiterates its continuous policy of zero tolerance for child conscription and all other grave violations against children. We strongly believe in addressing issues of children and armed conflict in the terms set out in resolution 1612 (2005). The Council must consider this issue with a view to supporting peacebuilding and security in conflict-affected societies, in order to enable States to protect their children from non-State actors who violate children with impunity.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158) refers to the recruitment of children as young as 14 years old by the LTTE, which used to operated in an area in the north of Sri Lanka. The report shows that recruitment by this group has intensified in recent months. The Secretary-General has listed the LTTE as a persistent violator since its first listing in 2003. In that regard, we call upon the Security Council to

consider deterrent action against such persistent violators. The breakaway faction of the LTTE, now registered as a political party, has entered into a tri-partite action plan with UNICEF and the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation in December 2008, and has released most child conscripts. It is in the process of accounting for the remaining children, most of whom have returned to their families. UNICEF has reported substantial progress, but more work remains to be done. We appreciate the valuable work of UNICEF in that regard.

The transformation of a terrorist group into a political party, thereby allowing it to enter the democratic process, is a difficult and at times perhaps imperfect process, but that must be acknowledged as a positive step. The LTTE's release of former child conscripts into a process of rehabilitation must be welcomed and encouraged. In his report, the Secretary-General encourages the Council to insist that

> "parties in situations of armed conflict . . . implement concrete time-bound action plans to halt the recruitment and use of children . . . ." (*S/2009/158, para. 164*)

We are pleased that we have already initiated such a process with one of the groups that was responsible for using children for combat in our country.

The Secretary-General in his report urges the Council

> "to consider means by which targeted measures may be applied against persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children" (*Ibid., para. 167*).

The LTTE in Sri Lanka falls well within that category and deserves stronger targeted measures. In line with the Secretary-General's recommendations, our Government has launched successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and established rehabilitation centres with assistance from UNICEF and we remain fully committed to the reintegration process. As recommended by the Secretary-General, we hope that programmes for the effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of children will receive timely and adequate resources and funding.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms rape and other grave acts of sexual violence committed against children in armed conflict, referred to in the report. There can be no place for such grave violations. We must find effective means to ensure that all actors abide by those principles. Any expansion of the mandate can be effective only when non-State actors are held to account through deterrent measures. Even on the core issue of the recruitment of children, we have hardly been able to make any change on the ground with the obduracy of groups like the LTTE. This will not inspire confidence in the process undertaken by the Council.

For instance, it is now over a decade since the LTTE publicly undertook to cease the recruitment and use of children as combatants and to release children within its ranks. That commitment was never implemented by the LTTE, which has continued to dramatically step up its recruitment and use of children as combatants. That continued long after the Council adopted resolution 1612 (2005) urging entities like the LTTE to cease such practices forthwith, release children within their ranks and enter into action plans.

Member States must deploy all efforts to find ways and means to make such non-State actors fall in line. The initiative by the Security Council to address the issue of children in armed conflict and subsequent efforts by the Working Group must be made to focus more on the real underlying issue of the recruitment of children. Tangible international action as opposed to mere expressions of concern is needed.

There is a need to encourage and guide former members of armed groups who have renounced violence and demonstrated a commitment to release children and cease child conscription. There is equally a need to take collective measures, including targeted sanctions, against those who continue to repeatedly violate resolution 1612 (2005), so as to demonstrate the Council's serious commitment to ending the use of children in armed conflict.

As the LTTE terrorism in Sri Lanka nears its end, the main priority for the Government is to care for and protect the children and people affected by that conflict in general, and especially, those who suffered as a result of the LTTE's persistent and deplorable practice of using child soldiers and human shields — a sentiment that was expressed by many delegations, including the Special Representative this morning.

The Government has comprehensively briefed Council members at several interactive discussions concerning the measures it has taken in that regard.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

Mr. Olinger (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I wish to thank you, Sir, for organizing this debate on children and armed conflict and to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her tireless commitment and her presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158). I welcome its quality and relevance. My delegation supports the statement made by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

I wish to emphasize a few points and principles that are important to my country, which supports bilaterally a number of organizations that are working towards mitigating the plight of children in armed conflict, in particular UNICEF and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Today, there is a range of legal and political instruments that seek to prevent the most serious suffering of children in armed conflict. Our common action to protect children in armed conflict also requires ratification, and especially implementation of relevant international instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. In that context, we must recall the importance of ratifying the Rome Statute, which contains an important provision defining the act of conscripting or drafting children younger than 15 years of age into the armed forces as a war crime.

My Government believes it is important to bring to justice all of the perpetrators of war crimes and massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law, especially when those crimes have been committed against children. Impunity cannot be tolerated, and my delegation fully agrees with the recommendation of the Secretary-General in his report, that the Council must not hesitate to refer violations committed against children in armed conflict to the International Criminal Court.

The 2007 Paris Conference was also a turning point that recognized that violations of the rights of children are violations of international law and that a State must not only protect children on its territory, but must also do its utmost to put constant pressure on armed groups to obtain the release of conscripted children. Two years later, it is essential to continue to follow up on those commitments.

Reading the report of the Secretary-General confirms the fact that, in spite of strong international mobilization, children continue to be the first casualties of armed conflicts. I am speaking of child soldiers, who are on the front lines of more than 30 conflicts throughout the world, as well of the millions of children suffering from the atrocities of war, including maiming and sexual violence. In that context, my delegation fully supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to broaden the monitoring and reporting mechanisms under resolution 1612 (2005) on grave sexual violence against children.

Luxembourg calls upon the Security Council, in line with the recommendation of the Secretary-General, to ensure that all peacekeeping operations have sufficient resources to implement a child protection policy, in particular through the deployment of child protection advisers. The advisers should also draw attention to situations where peacekeeping might be carried out in a way that acts to the detriment of children.

All conflict situations in which atrocities are committed against children require our urgent attention. I wish to note a few specific cases. At present there is fighting in Sri Lanka, and civilians, including many children, are once again the main casualties. While violations of the rights of children are not known in their full scope, it is clear from the Secretary-General's report that the various parties to the conflict, in particular the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, have conscripted children, and that a large number of children have been kidnapped.

While the Government of Sri Lanka has assumed some responsibility for children leaving armed groups by promoting their reintegration, indiscriminate aerial bombardment and long-range artillery fire are causing grave suffering among the civilian population, particularly children. I join my voice to all those calling for an immediate ceasefire.

In conclusion, I wish to say a word on Burundi, on behalf of which my country is involved in the Peacebuilding Commission. Luxembourg welcomes the demobilization of former child soldiers, including girls, from the ranks of the Forces nationales de libération (FNL), and appeals strongly to the FNL and the Government to pursue the demobilization of other children in compliance with international norms. It is important now to facilitate their return and sustained

socio-economic reintegration through education and vocational training programmes. This situation demonstrates that the Peacebuilding Commission can play a critical role in the mobilization of resources for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and in supporting awareness campaigns concerning child soldiers.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Edrees (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to start by expressing our appreciation to you, Sir, for convening this debate on the comprehensive report (S/2009/158) submitted by the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, and to his Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her objective and balanced briefing, which exposed the grave violations that children face in armed conflicts, including killing, maiming, rape and sexual violence, abduction, recruitment, attacks on schools and hospitals being used as shelters, denial of humanitarian access, their use as human shields, and arbitrary detention, in violation of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law.

The report adopts a constructive, pragmatic and cooperative approach towards all situations reported, researched, monitored and investigated. It was drafted following broad consultations with all United Nations entities and relevant task forces committed to the principles of dialogue and target-sharing, as well as with Governments that hold the primary responsibility for protecting children. Such cooperation has ultimately led to some progress in such countries as Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Philippines and Colombia, and to positive developments on issues related to violence against children in the Sudan. Those developments include the adoption of a presidential decree of pardon for 99 children out of 110 recruited by the Justice and Equality Movement, who attacked Omdurman and were captured by the Sudan Armed Forces, and the cooperation of the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations in addressing violations by rebel groups against children on both sides, in investigating Government violations and in bringing proven perpetrators to justice.

However, despite all the efforts and field visits, the report paints a disturbing picture of ongoing violence against children in conflict zones and of new forms of violence in some of those areas. This phenomenon requires close coordination between the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council in studying the root causes of the increased use of children in armed conflicts, the main causes of violence against children, and the means to fully implement international standards and to guarantee full respect for international law and international humanitarian law, including through the revitalization and implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in order to prevent any involvement of children in armed conflicts.

We have followed with great concern the grave atrocities perpetrated by the Israel Defense Forces against children in Lebanon and the Palestinian occupied territories, including the illegal use of cluster munitions by Israel during the 2006 attacks on defenceless people in the villages, schools and farms of Lebanon, as revealed and recorded in the report and monitored by various United Nations agencies. We demand that the Security Council ensure Israel's cooperation with the United Nations and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict by handing over relevant data, including the necessary information on landmines and cluster bomb sites. That would allow those munitions to be cleared and prevent the victimization of more children exposed to the threat of explosive remnants of war in the affected areas; yet Israel continues to ignore all the Special Representative's appeals in that regard.

As for Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories, the report reveals old and ongoing grave violations by Israel against Palestinian children. These include the killing of thousands by the Israel Defense Forces and the injuring and maiming of thousands more by the use of phosphoric bombs, missile strikes, internationally prohibited ammunition, tank fire, aerial bombardment and rubber-coated bullets in numerous ongoing attacks by Israeli settlers against children in villages. The Israel Defense Forces have also used Palestinian children as human shields, bombing schools and killing and injuring the students and teachers therein. Israeli settlers, too, have attacked schools, including those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and others, hospitals, infrastructure and humanitarian relief agencies, and have severely

hindered access to humanitarian assistance and medical relief services. All of these acts violate international law and call for the direct intervention of the Security Council to ensure that these atrocities are effectively addressed and prevented from recurring and that their perpetrators are brought to justice.

In so doing, the Security Council and the General Assembly must give due attention to the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child following its review of the first and only report submitted by Israel, in 2002, on the implementation of its commitments under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government of Israel continues to completely ignore those recommendations, which include taking all immediate and necessary measures to end violence against children; taking all immediate and necessary measures to prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflicts; investigating forthwith all incidents of the killing or injuring of children and bringing the perpetrators to justice; and compensating the victims of human rights violations, especially children, and rehabilitating and reintegrating them into society.

At the same time, we demand that Israel implement the recommendations set forth by the Human Rights Council at its most recent session concerning the universal periodic review of the situation of human rights in Israel, in particular those related to Palestinian children under occupation.

Egypt supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that the criteria set out in the annexes of the report be broadened to include not only those perpetrators convicted of recruiting children as soldiers and of sexual violence against children, but also those guilty of all six forms of grave violations against children in armed conflict, on the condition that indictment relies on verified data, field visits and field follow-ups, as well as data collected through the coordinated efforts of all the relevant United Nations agencies and programmes, in close consultation with the Governments concerned and with the support of all United Nations Member States.

In conclusion, there is a special role for the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We believe it is necessary to follow up on its recommendations, which were adopted after careful study of each situation and after due consultation with parties concerned, including Governments and the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflicts, specially those recommendations regarding children in the occupied Arab territories. We also stress how important it is for the Working Group to take into consideration recommendations adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding the situation of children in armed conflict, bearing in mind the Committee's role as a comprehensive mechanism bringing together expertise from many Member States with a value-added perspective that should be used to ensure that its potential benefit is realized to the greatest extent possible.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Zhanibekov (Kazakhstan): Let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on the important issue of children and armed conflict.

Almost 20 years after the World Summit for Children and 10 years after adoption of Security Council resolution 1261 (1999), on children and armed conflict, the issue of grave violations of the rights of children in armed conflicts is still an important item on the Security Council's agenda. Moreover, because of the rising number of conflict situations worldwide, the data on children affected by hostilities in certain regions remains daunting.

The Security Council has defined six types of grave violations of children's rights as crimes under international humanitarian law: the recruitment and use of child soldiers, the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence against children, attacks on schools and hospitals, the abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access to children.

We believe that by making full use of existing tools, the United Nations system can promote a considerable decrease in the number of children affected by armed conflicts by preventing violations of children's rights and addressing impunity of violators. The basic data collection instrument is the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations of children's rights, as established by resolution 1612 (2005). That instrument is a main source of data for adequate measures by the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to address child rights violations.

Kazakhstan supports activities making use of this unique tool and highly appreciates efforts of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to extend the research scope of the monitoring and reporting mechanism. We must acknowledge that this process is a considerable step towards successful elimination of violations of children's rights in armed conflicts. Incorporating new components into the scope of the research of the monitoring and reporting mechanism could lead to more balanced and comprehensive protection of children's rights, including those relating to health.

I would like furthermore to stress the issue of the rehabilitation and reintegration of former combatants and children affected by armed conflict. During a previous Security Council debate, Kazakhstan underlined the necessity to put in place the conditions for ensuring the education of children who have been victims of the consequences of war. The high-quality education of children is a key to avoiding exploitation, violence and their recruitment into existing armed groups. Professional education of children affected by armed conflict is not a short-term investment. However, it is vital to draw the attention of the world community to the possibilities of adequate education for such children as an intrinsic part of establishing a post-conflict system. For this reason, an educational process requires proper financial and technical support from sponsoring countries.

Kazakhstan believes that lack of education and the resulting poverty and inadequate level of development can only exacerbate the condition of the population in conflict areas. In this regard, we entirely support the initiative of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, together with UNICEF, on preparing a thematic collection containing the best examples of the reintegration of children into society through education.

In spite of the absence of armed conflict on the territory of our country, Kazakhstan has acquired solid national experience in overcoming financial and social difficulties. A decision not to cut financing for the educational system was accepted even in the current difficult period of development. The international merit-based *Bolashak* — "Future" — scholarship system for gifted young people founded by the President of Kazakhstan has been operating successfully for 15 years. As a decade and a half of practice shows, this policy of the Government of Kazakhstan has paid off. This policy also includes 100 merit-based educational scholarships provided annually to students from Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Missing the opportunity to provide young people with a proper education can lead to the loss of a generation that should be the foundation for building a newly fashioned State.

We believe that active discussion during the current open debate will draw well-deserved attention from all stakeholders to efforts to overcome the most destructive consequences of war: the undermining of the life and health of future generations.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Ndabarasa (Rwanda): My delegation wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for the opportunity to address the Council. We greatly appreciate your delegation's laudable efforts in organizing this debate on children and armed conflict and congratulate it on its assumption of the Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. We also congratulate the French delegation on the successful conclusion of their mandate as Chair of the Working Group.

Allow me to commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her tireless efforts in highlighting the issue of children and armed conflict. My thanks go also to the Secretary-General, to Mr. Alain Le Roy, Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, and to Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, for their briefings and for the commendable work they have done in addressing the impact of armed conflict on children. By the same token, allow me to pay particular tribute to Ms. Grace Akallo for her testimony and her resilience, and for putting a face on the issue before us.

The issue of children and armed conflict is a symptom of the failure to comprehensively address the causes of conflict and to utilize existing mechanisms for the prevention of conflict. If we are to adequately address this scourge it is imperative that we utilize the mechanisms we have in place to address the causes of conflict and to prevent conflicts from arising in the first place.

Allow me to address a few specific issues in the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158). The report acknowledges the significance of the recently concluded "Umoja Wetu" joint operations between the

Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. These operations have greatly undermined the capabilities of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and its sub-groups and have led to the reintegration of the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP) into the Congolese Armed Forces. But, most important, they have resulted in the repatriation of refugees held hostage by the FDLR and its sub-groups, many of whom were child combatants. However, the FDLR and its sub-groups, which are listed in the report as persistent offenders, continue to forcibly recruit children into their ranks and commit serious crimes, including sexual violence. My delegation calls upon the international community, through the Security Council and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), to support and build upon the progress made by the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda and to utilize the targeted measures, including sanctions, at its disposal to eliminate the threat posed by the FDLR and its sub-groups.

The genocide in Rwanda in 1994 included some of the most inhumane acts of violence targeted at women and girls and the use of sexual violence as an element of genocide. My delegation therefore welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendation to expand the protection framework by adding rape and other grave acts of sexual violence against children as a criterion for inclusion on the annexed lists, as well as to strengthen the monitoring and reporting of those crimes.

We welcome the progress made in mainstreaming children and armed conflict issues into peacekeeping and political missions. We have taken particular note of the efforts outlined by Mr. Le Roy with regard to MONUC-UNICEF collaboration to address the issue of children and armed conflict in the Kivus. We also welcome the efforts undertaken by the Department of Political Affairs in that respect. However, mainstreaming alone will not address the issue of children and armed conflict. The Security Council needs to empower peacekeeping missions to implement policies on the ground through clearer and more robust mandates.

In his recommendations, the Secretary-General correctly points out the regional dimensions of this issue and the need to establish mechanisms and strategies for coordination and cooperation. My Government and that of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have shown the way forward. We urge the international community to follow our lead in taking practical and pragmatic steps to address the issue of children and armed conflict.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your delegation's assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would also like to commend the Mexican delegation for its dedication in successfully guiding the Council's work, as well as for the participation at this meeting of your country's Minister for Foreign Affairs. I also thank your delegation for convening this open debate and for providing us with a second opportunity this month to address the Council on an important issue, in this case one that affects the most vulnerable members of society: children.

The Council's interest in the issue of children and armed conflict is commendable, but it should not be relegated to the theoretical realm. The recommendations of the Secretary-General and of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict must be implemented. The Council's responsibility regarding the protection of children in armed conflict should not be limited to monitoring the situation as regards recruiting, arming and exploiting minors in the camps and on the battlefield. It should also monitor the situation with regard to children who are not able to fully enjoy their rights or whose rights are denied altogether — rights that have been guaranteed to them under international law and conventions. This includes denial of the rights to health, education and access to humanitarian assistance in conflict situations and humanitarian disasters. We should therefore focus on strengthening monitoring and reporting on serious violations of the rights of children in armed conflict. That should also include violations of the right of children to personal security, health and education.

Although the international community has amply demonstrated its concern about such serious violations, we note the fragility of the international will in many instances when it comes to addressing the issue of children being deprived of education in situations of armed conflict, including foreign occupation, despite

the fact that education is a fundamental right of the utmost importance to children affected by conflict. Roadblocks that prevent students from attending schools and universities — thereby depriving them of their legitimate right to education — result in their falling far behind in academic achievement and produce a culture of despair and fear among young people, rather than the culture of hope and life that is the primary reason for putting an end to conflict in the long term.

The military aggression by Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip late last year was a glaring example of the types of violations to which children in armed conflict situations are subjected. That aggression included the killing of hundreds of Palestinian children at the hands of Israeli forces, including students sheltering in schools that were directly hit and in hospitals deprived of urgent medical supplies. The Secretary-General highlighted some of those grave violations in his report (S/2009/158) to the Council submitted pursuant to the presidential statement issued as document S/PRST/2008/6.

In that spirit, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Misnad, First Lady of Qatar and Consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar, took the initiative as UNESCO Special Envoy for Basic and Higher Education to deplore the destruction of educational institutions of the Gaza Strip and called on the Security Council to develop a plan to designate schools and educational institutions as safe havens for students and their families and to ensure that they had access to humanitarian services, deliveries of basic goods, and evacuation services for the sick and wounded. Previously, Her Highness had addressed a letter to the Council (see S/2009/12) calling on it to assume its responsibility and investigate crimes perpetrated by the occupying forces against Palestinian civilians, in particular children.

We reiterate our call for the Council to investigate the Israeli army's direct attacks on Gaza schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, so as to determine who was responsible and bring them to justice. In that regard, I should like to refer to the report of the Secretary-General's Board of Inquiry into that situation in order to emphasize the importance of following up on it.

Finally, it is crucial that we not lose sight of the fact that children are the most precious resource in the building of peaceful societies. The Government of Qatar will seek to cooperate with international partners and international organizations in order to ensure the right of children to education in conflict situations. The Security Council should also renew its commitment to international efforts aimed at protecting and promoting the right of children to education, so as to promote international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Myanmar.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this open debate on a subject that is of great concern to all of us. My delegation also joins others in expressing our thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her informative briefing.

Armed conflict always takes a human toll and causes devastation. It is even more shocking when children become its victims or are forced to become armed perpetrators in conflicts. Myanmar shares the view that the most effective and sustainable solution to protect children in armed conflict is to address the root causes of conflict. Therefore, the promotion of sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, the promotion of national reconciliation, good governance and the protection of human rights would go a long way towards preventing and resolving conflicts.

Myanmar has taken concrete steps to prevent conflict and to protect children in armed conflict. Stringent laws and regulations have been put in place. Under the Defence Services Act, Myanmar's military prohibits the conscription or recruitment of children under 18 years of age. In order to prevent underage recruitment, new recruits for the military services must undergo stringent scrutiny, not only during the recruitment and training period but also during the post-training period. To further strengthen that screening process, in 2004, the Government established a high-level committee for the prevention of the military recruitment of underage children. Under the committee's supervision and surveillance, between 2004 and 2009, a total of 296 instances of underage recruitment were detected, resulting in discharge from military service. While those children were returned to their respective guardians, punitive action was taken

against military personnel who failed to abide by recruitment rules and regulations. In 2008 alone, punitive action was taken against 23 military personnel. The Committee also works in close cooperation with UNICEF and the United Nations Resident Coordinator's office in the area of information-sharing and awareness-raising campaigns.

With the support and cooperation of the United Nations country team, the action plan is being updated to bring it in line with international standards. Updated information on the work of the Committee has been provided to the United Nations country team on a regular basis. This includes lists of and detailed information on underage children who have been discharged from military service. For ease of verification and follow-up by the United Nations country team, the addresses of the discharged underage recruits will be provided in future through the information-sharing process. The Myanmar Government has also extended an invitation to the United Nations country team to be present during the hand-over of the underage children to their respective guardians.

Advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns were also carried out for military personnel, police personnel, social workers and the general public. The Government, with assistance from UNICEF and other non-governmental organizations such as World Vision (Myanmar) and Save the Children (Myanmar), conducted seminars and workshops on the subject. The Social Welfare Department, in collaboration with UNICEF, published and distributed to members of the military and armed groups a pocket-sized handbook on preventing the recruitment of underage children.

Despite the commitment made at the highest level and the concrete steps taken by the Myanmar Government, which have been recognized in the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158), it is regrettable that the well-trained and disciplined Myanmar national army, the Tatmadaw Kyi, is still listed in annex I of the Secretary-General's report. Myanmar urges that due recognition be given to the progress made by the Government and that our national army be removed from the list in future reports.

Myanmar wishes to underscore that the Government is also making progress in the national reconciliation process. Of the armed ethnic insurgent groups, 95 per cent, a total of more than 100,000 people, returned to the legal fold between 1989 and 2008. The olive branch is still extended to the remaining 5 per cent. The former insurgent groups are now working with the people and the Government on the development of their respective regions. They are also actively participating in the national political process aimed at transforming Myanmar into a democratic nation. Today, peace and stability prevail in almost all corners of Myanmar. The country is no longer in a situation of armed conflict. The situation in Myanmar is therefore no longer relevant to the discussion of the issue of children and armed conflict.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate that my Government is committed at the highest level to preventing the recruitment of child soldiers into Myanmar's armed forces. To this end, Myanmar will continue to support and cooperate with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations country team.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, and the delegation of Mexico on the effective manner in which you have conducted the work of both the Security Council during the month of April and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. My delegation appreciates your initiative in convening this debate of the Council.

In the political Constitution of my country, we give priority to children's rights, since we consider that their protection is in society's highest interests. This precept is reflected in our institutional structure, which permits the implementation of public policies aimed at protecting children and, in particular, those children whose rights have been infringed.

In the context of our comprehensive child welfare policy, in December last year Colombia voluntarily accepted the monitoring and reporting mechanism provided for in Security Council resolution 1612 (2005). The voluntary nature of its acceptance is based on the fact that the situation in Colombia is covered in annex II of the report of the Secretary General (S/2009/158) and is not on the Security Council's agenda.

In accepting the monitoring and reporting mechanism, my country recognizes the contribution

that the United Nations can make to the national Government's primary duty to protect children affected by the actions of illegal armed groups.

The Colombian State has established a comprehensive strategy to address the prevention of the recruitment and use of children by illegal armed groups, as well as the protection, release and reintegration of children who have been rescued from such groups.

The first of these aspects, prevention, is the main objective of the intersectorial commission created by the Government of Colombia in December 2007. The strategies of this commission, led by the Vice-President of the Republic, include promoting the transformation of family, community and institutional environments into factors that safeguard children's rights. The aim is to consolidate protection networks that can reduce children's risk of exploitation by illegal armed groups. Since its creation, the commission has focused its work in 61 municipalities with high social and economic vulnerability, where illegal armed groups are present and the risk of recruitment has been reported.

In terms of the protection and restitution of the fundamental rights of children rescued from illegal armed groups, the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare has provided assistance to 3,940 such children to date. The programmes of the Institute seek to provide comprehensive physical and psychological care and to prepare children and youths for complete reintegration into society.

My delegation has taken note of the eighth report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on children and armed conflict. As we have indicated on other occasions, we do not consider it appropriate to include references to criminal organizations or gangs in the Secretary-General's reports, as such organizations do not fall within the purview established in the Council's resolutions. One example of this is the case of criminal groups devoted to drug trafficking.

Furthermore, my delegation wishes to express its concern over some passages in the report that go beyond existing provisions of the Security Council's resolutions concerning children and armed conflict. This applies particularly to references to Colombia included in paragraph 147 and in the listing on page 38 of the report. The mechanism in Colombia is about to be implemented. It is therefore inappropriate to evaluate it in advance, even more so when this goes beyond the framework established by the Council's resolutions.

Allow me to make some observations on the recommendations of the Secretary-General in his report.

The Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict have established a clear distinction between situations that are on the agenda of the Council and those that are not. The existence of annex I and annex II in the report of the Secretary-General is sufficient embodiment of this distinction, which should therefore be maintained.

Likewise, the Council should continue to attach greater weight and priority to the fundamental issue that led to the creation of the mechanism — the recruitment and exploitation of children. Also, any implementation of targeted measures must be in accordance with Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter.

Colombia, for its part, rejects every form of sexual violence, including rape and other manifestations of sexual abuse. They are even more reprehensible when they prey on children. My delegation considers that Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) constitute the guiding compass on this matter.

Allow me to conclude with an unequivocal reiteration of the commitment of the Government of Colombia to the protection and promotion of children's rights. The reference point of that commitment is the framework established by the Security Council, as well as the existing mechanisms and procedures. In that spirit, we will maintain a continued dialogue to advance towards the goals identified.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Musayev (Azerbaijan): At the outset, let me thank you, Sir, for convening this important open debate and express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2009/158) on children and armed conflict. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for her comprehensive presentation, as well as the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Executive Director of UNICEF for their briefings on the matter.

We reiterate our commitment to continuing to contribute to the activities of the existing United Nations mechanisms and other relevant organizations and agencies with the aim of ensuring more effective protection of child rights and improving the situation of children affected by armed conflict.

Azerbaijan's interest in the topic under consideration is obvious and derives from its practical experience in addressing the impact on children of the armed aggression against my country and in engaging in international efforts to ensure respect by the relevant party of its obligations under international law.

The occupation by Armenia of the territories of Azerbaijan exerts considerable influence, inter alia, on the humanitarian aspect of the problem and primarily affects the most vulnerable groups. Azerbaijan continues to suffer one of the highest proportions of refugees and displaced persons in the world, large numbers of whom are children. The most serious international offences have been committed in the course of the conflict. Even children have not been spared. During one night alone in February 1992, when the town of Khojaly in the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan was captured by invading Armenian forces, 63 children were intentionally killed and dozens were maimed and taken hostage. Of more than 4,200 people reported missing in connection with the conflict, 47 are children.

In recent years, the issue of children and armed conflict has been inscribed firmly on the international agenda and a solid body of international legal norms and standards has been elaborated. Important steps have been taken through the application and enforcement of these norms and standards to achieve accountability for grave child rights violations. Indeed, the international community has witnessed some unprecedented initiatives to address impunity.

The engagement of the Security Council has increased the general awareness of the need to protect children in armed conflict, significantly advanced the scope of actions and created opportunities to improve common approaches in this regard. Although progress has been made in a number of situations of armed conflict, children are still suffering in many places worldwide and continue to be the primary victims of war. This bitter truth represents a profound challenge to the international legal order and therefore requires the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate and prevent illegal practices affecting children's rights, as well as to fight impunity for grave violations.

It is important to acknowledge the equal weight of all grave violations. Azerbaijan shares the view that the existing criteria of violations should be expanded to include those responsible for the intentional killing and maiming of children. At the same time, particular consideration should be given to internally displaced children in the context of ensuring their inalienable right to return, and to the implications for the protection of child rights of illegal policies and practices in situations of foreign occupation.

Another challenging issue requiring urgent action is that of children taken hostage and reported missing in connection with armed conflict. The General Assembly, in its resolution 63/183, of which Azerbaijan was a main sponsor, requests States to pay the utmost attention to the problem of missing children and to take appropriate measures to search for and identify such children and to reunite them with their families.

We look forward to the adoption of the presidential statement, which will focus on the ways and means by which the international community can continue to contribute to identifying long-term and sustained solutions to the problem.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mrs. Sahussarungsi (Thailand): On behalf of the Government and the people of Thailand, I wish to warmly congratulate Mexico on your excellent work, Sir, as President of the Security Council for the month of April. I would also like to join other delegations in expressing our solidarity with Mexico in your effort to tackle the current public health crisis.

Thailand appreciates the leadership of Mexico in advancing the agenda of children and armed conflict in the Security Council. We share the commitment and concerns of the international community on this critical issue. In that connection, my delegation would like to take this opportunity to share with the Council our views on this important issue.

First, Thailand notes that the Security Council has made significant contributions to the issue of children and armed conflict, in accordance with its mandate to maintain international peace and security.

We welcome the ongoing mainstreaming of child protection in various tasks of the United Nations. In particular, we welcome the ongoing attempt to incorporate children's issues into peacekeeping operations mandated by the Security Council and to ensure that children's concerns are duly reflected and taken into account in all phases of mission planning. We also welcome the mainstreaming of a child-conscious approach in various political and peacebuilding missions.

In the meantime, we have been following with interest the efforts to strengthen the present mechanism established by the Security Council on the issue of children and armed conflict. While we believe that there is certainly room for improving and consolidating the current mechanism, we agree with the view expressed earlier that an incremental, step-by-step approach, based on thorough reflection and consideration of the Council, should be the way forward. We cannot stress enough that such key principles as respect, sincere dialogue and cooperation, the building of trust and confidence, and consent should form the basis of all undertakings of the United Nations agencies in their relationship with the concerned Governments.

Secondly, because challenges relating to children are multidimensional and diverse, Thailand believes that greater coordination and coherence among relevant United Nations forums and agencies are needed. In addition to the Security Council, we welcome active interest in child-related issues in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Human Rights Council, United Nations funds and programmes, as well as relevant human rights treaty bodies. We believe that each of those forums and agencies has its uniqueness, strengths and constraints, in line with their respective mandates. With better coordination and coherence among those diverse instruments, the United Nations system as a whole will be able to better respond to the challenges pertaining to children around the world.

Thirdly, Thailand strongly believes that a holistic approach is needed to address challenges relating to children and armed conflict in a sustainable manner. We need to understand that each situation is unique and that there is no one-size-fits-all prescription to every situation around the world. The best way to address these challenges in the long term is to tackle, with understanding, the political, economic and social conditions that have given rise to each situation. We join other delegations in reiterating the primary responsibility of the States concerned for ensuring the effective protection and promotion of the rights of the child in their respective jurisdictions.

At the same time, we believe that the international community can play a complementary role by providing constructive encouragement and appropriate support to those States. In that regard, we call on the international community to invest more in areas that can make a real difference on the ground, such as the provision of basic needs, the improvement of people's well-being, basic health care, education, poverty alleviation, security, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights. All of those have both empowering and protection effects on the societies concerned as a whole.

Fourthly, Thailand's commitment to the cause of the advancement and protection of children has been and will always be strong, firm and consistent. That seriousness has been well reflected in our efforts domestically, regionally and internationally. At present, Thailand is a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, including that on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We are committed to the effective implementation of the obligations contained therein.

We have invested heavily in various measures to promote, protect and develop children throughout the country so that they can become a productive force in society. We have been doing our utmost to ensure universal access to quality education and a safe learning environment for our children. Special attention has also been given to the issue of human resource development to ensure that all children in Thailand, regardless of their background, are well equipped for the challenges of the globalizing world. At the same time, earnest efforts have been made to promote the appreciation of diversity, tolerance, moderation and social harmony among children in Thailand.

At the regional level, Thailand, as the Chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), has been working closely with other ASEAN member States to advance the issue of human rights in the region, including the rights of the child. Later this year, ASEAN is scheduled to establish a human rights body to advance human rights in the region. ASEAN

member States have also been working together through various initiatives to promote and protect the rights of the child as a part of the ASEAN community-building process.

Last but not least, Thailand cannot stress enough that the utmost care should be exercised in the preparation of the Secretary-General's report on the issue of children and armed conflict. It should be clear that the scope of the report should be restricted strictly to situations of armed conflict in accordance with applicable international law. In that connection, we would like to underline that any reference in such a report to any country where there is no situation of armed conflict in accordance with applicable international law — for example, a reference to Thailand — is not only unwarranted but also misleading, and therefore should not be repeated in the future. A consultative and cooperative approach based on the willingness to listen and understand the complexity, sensitivity and nuances of each case is needed to ensure that any well-intentioned effort does not have unintended adverse effects on the ground, in particular inadvertent impacts on children themselves.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Armenia.

Mrs. Khoudaverdian (Armenia): First of all, allow me to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico for the initiative to convene us today to launch a discussion on such an important issue. Allow me also to commend the Secretary-General for the report (S/2009/158) he has submitted on an issue that leaves none of us indifferent. We would also like to express our gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Radhika Coomaraswamy for her detailed presentation of the report.

I join all previous speakers in their determination to ensure children's right to live and grow in peace and dignity, which is a primary responsibility of any Government and any society. Today's discussion and the moving testimony of Ms. Akallo are tangible evidence of how unprotected many of those who constitute the most vulnerable segment of our societies, children, continue to be.

I come from a region that has experienced a number of armed conflicts in recent decades. The problems and concerns mentioned here are therefore, unfortunately, not purely humanitarian in nature for us. Today, a final resolution to the conflicts in the South Caucasus is still pending. A no-war/no-peace situation cannot ensure a safe and decent future for children and young people who have already witnessed all the atrocities that wars bring. It is our belief that only a fundamental and comprehensive political settlement of the existing disputes can bring long-lasting peace and stability to the region, thereby securing the rights of our children to a peaceful future.

Armenia has more than once reiterated its commitment to the peaceful resolution of the existing conflicts, for the benefit and progress of the entire region. In that regard, I reserve the right to respond to the statement of the delegation of Azerbaijan, which has once again used this high forum to misled Member States with its unchanged rhetoric. It is well known that it was Azerbaijan that, two decades ago, unleashed a full-scale war against what was at that time its own peaceful population of Nagorny Karabakh, forcing tens of thousands of people, including children, to quit their homes and become refugees and internally displaced persons, and leaving thousands of them orphaned and maimed.

The military actions undertaken by our neighbour have had unpredictable consequences for Azerbaijan itself. Today, it is in everyone's interest to take decisive steps to move the peace process forward in order to protect our children from renewed violence. Instead, we continue to hear militaristic rhetoric from high-level Azerbaijani authorities, which is not only detrimental to the establishment of the confidence that is so badly needed between our two peoples, but also creates an atmosphere of hostility and hatred in which new generations of Azerbaijani youth are being brought up.

Armenia strongly believes in the need to achieve a comprehensive settlement to conflicts through the negotiating process. We are grateful for this opportunity to reiterate our commitment to guaranteeing the protection of children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the representative of Benin.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to express my delegation's high appreciation for the way in which your country, Sir, has led the work of the Security Council this month. The presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mexico has considerably enhanced the quality of this debate.

My delegation notes with great satisfaction the Secretary-General's personal contribution and the diligent participation of the Deputy Secretary-General. We see all this as strong evidence of the recognition of the gravity of the situation of children in armed conflict. We pay tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and her entire team, as well as to the task leaders of the monitoring and reporting mechanism, for their untiring efforts and praiseworthy self-sacrifice in discharging the heavy burden entrusted to them.

The Secretary-General's very disturbing annual report (S/2009/158), which Ms. Coomaraswamy eloquently presented to the Council, says a great deal about the scale of the challenge posed by the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and of the massive violations of their human rights. We welcome the commitment of the members of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, charged with responsibility on this issue. They have played a significant role in achieving progress in the implementation of the action plans adopted by parties, in cooperation with the mechanism, thus demonstrating the great utility of the mechanism in assisting affected children.

The invaluable contribution of UNICEF to the implementation of child protection in the field, in conditions that are well known to be extremely difficult, is a particular credit to its leaders and staff at headquarters and in the field. To my country, Benin — which negotiated and co-sponsored resolution 1612 (2005) in the hope of putting a rapid end to the aforementioned phenomena — their upsurge during the reporting period is most alarming. The situation requires bold measures to increase the pressure on parties to conflicts that continue to commit grave violations of children's rights. In that respect, the Security Council should use the instruments at its disposal to obtain the cooperation of unrepentant violators of children's rights.

There is an urgent need to further develop the monitoring and reporting mechanism in order to ensure that it covers all crimes committed against children and to end the prevailing use of double standards. My delegation advocates the inclusion on the list of criteria of the six identified violations of children's rights, to include the no less horrendous practice of sexual violence against children. Such practices are sufficiently serious for the International Criminal Court to involve itself by initiating proceedings against perpetrators in cases where national jurisdictions are unable to provide justice to victims.

The necessary arrangements must be made to ensure that children exposed to such reprehensible practices are not abandoned to their sad fate. The responsibility to assist, which is incumbent on the international community, requires action. These crimes are part and parcel of the responsibility to protect that it must fulfil through the competent entities, which must use the means at their disposal. Peacekeeping operations should be fully up to speed in that respect. We note the briefing on that issue by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Alain le Roy.

In all circumstances, there is a need to end impunity for crimes against children in armed conflict. The United Nations should fully exploit every opportunity for action under resolution 1612 (2005). If there should prove to be a need at this stage of its implementation for an additional resolution to ensure the universality of the mechanism and to enhance its effectiveness in the fight to protect children in armed conflict effectively, no artificial obstacles should be raised to hinder its adoption.

We must give serious consideration to strengthening national mechanisms for effective follow-up and assistance to affected children. Appropriate assistance programmes should be established at the national and local levels to ensure the rehabilitation and lasting social reintegration of demobilized children. The testimony of Ms. Grace Akallo has shown us the path we must follow in order to provide a better future to children mistreated in armed conflict.

In conclusion, my delegation associates itself with the presidential statement to be adopted at the end of this meeting. The deadline which the Security Council has set for finalizing its deliberations on the issue of extending the annexes to the report represents a commitment that we duly note. Beyond the efforts under way to increase pressure on violators of children's rights in armed conflict, the best form of protection would be the cessation of such conflicts. We have always cherished that hope. We must enhance diplomatic measures to reconcile belligerents and to

help countries at war to return rapidly to the path of peace.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): After consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council takes note with appreciation of the eighth report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/158) on children and armed conflict and of the positive developments referred to in the report, and notes the continuing challenges in the implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005) reflected therein.

"The Security Council reaffirms its commitment to address the widespread impact of armed conflict on children, and its determination to ensure respect for, and the implementation of, its resolution 1612 (2005) and all its previous resolutions on children and armed conflict, as well as respect for other applicable international law related to the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

"The Security Council stresses, in this regard, the importance of adopting a broad strategy of conflict prevention, which addresses the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner in order to enhance the protection of children on a long-term basis, including by promoting sustainable development, poverty eradication, national reconciliation, good governance, democracy, the rule of law and respect for and protection of human rights.

"The Security Council acknowledges that the implementation of its resolution 1612 (2005) in situations listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report (S/2009/158) has generated progress and invites the Secretary-General, where applicable, to strengthen the efforts to bring the monitoring and reporting mechanism to its full capacity in order to allow for prompt advocacy and effective response to all violations and abuses committed against children. In this regard, the Council reiterates its request to the Secretary-General to provide additional administrative support to its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

"The Security Council reiterates its equally strong condemnation of the continuing recruitment and use of children in armed conflict in violation of applicable international law, killing and maiming of children, rape and other sexual violence, abductions, denial of humanitarian access to children and attacks against schools and hospitals by parties to armed conflict. The Council condemns all other violations of international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, committed against children in situations of armed conflict. The Council demands that all relevant parties immediately put an end to such practices and take special measures to protect children.

"The Security Council expresses deep concern that civilians, in particular children, continue to account for a considerable number of casualties resulting from killing and maiming in armed conflicts, including as a result of deliberate targeting, indiscriminate and excessive use of force, indiscriminate use of landmines and cluster munitions and use of children as human shields.

"The Security Council further expresses deep concern with the high incidence and appalling levels of brutality, of rape and other forms of sexual violence against children, girls and boys, committed in the context of and associated with armed conflict, including the use or commission of rape and other forms of sexual violence in some situations as a tactic of war.

"The Security Council recognizes the importance of including in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports on children and armed conflict those parties to armed conflict that commit acts of killing and maiming of children that are prohibited under applicable international law or acts of rape and other sexual violence against children that are prohibited under applicable international law, in situations of armed conflict, and expresses its intention to continue its consideration of this issue, in order to take action within three months of this date.

"The Security Council reiterates its call on parties to armed conflict listed in the annexes of the Secretary General's report (S/2009/158) that have not already done so to prepare and

implement, without further delay, concrete time-bound action plans to halt recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law, and to address all other violations and abuses committed against children and undertake specific commitments and measures in this regard, in close cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the United Nations country-level task forces on monitoring and reporting.

"The Security Council expresses its concern with situations where insufficient or no progress has been made by parties listed in the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports in halting recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law, including through the preparation and implementation of concrete time-bound action plans, and reiterates its determination to ensure respect for its resolutions on children and armed conflict, making use of all the tools provided in its resolution 1612 (2005), including action as appropriate in accordance with paragraph 9 of its resolution 1612 (2005).

"The Security Council strongly emphasizes the need for concerned Member States to take decisive and immediate action against persistent perpetrators of violations against children, and to bring to justice those responsible for the recruitment and use of children in violation of applicable international law and other violations against children through national justice systems and, where applicable, international justice mechanisms and mixed criminal courts and tribunals, with a view to ending impunity for those committing crimes against children.

"The Security Council reiterates the primary responsibility of States in providing effective protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflicts, and calls upon them to comply with their obligations under applicable international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, and encourages States to strengthen national measures for the prevention of violations against children in armed conflict, including recruitment and use of children and their use in hostilities in violation of applicable international law, inter alia, by enacting legislation that explicitly prohibits such recruitment and use as well as other violations, and urges States that have not yet done so to consider ratifying or acceding to this Convention and its Optional Protocols.

"The Security Council reiterates the importance of the full, safe and unhindered access of humanitarian personnel and goods and the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all children affected by armed conflict, and stresses the importance for all, within the framework of humanitarian assistance, of upholding and respecting the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

"The Security Council remains concerned with the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons and its effect on and their use by children in armed conflict.

"The Security Council welcomes the sustained engagement of its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and requests it to adopt, with the administrative support of the Secretariat, timely conclusions and recommendations in line with resolution 1612 (2005). The Council encourages its Working Group to continue its review process, to enhance its ability to follow up the implementation of its recommendations and the development and implementation of action plans to halt recruitment and use of children, and to consider and react in a timely manner to information on situations of children and armed conflict, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNICEF. It also invites its Working Group to enhance its communication with relevant Security Council sanctions committees, including by forwarding pertinent information.

"The Security Council commends the work carried out by the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, and emphasizes the importance of her country visits in promoting collaboration between the United Nations and Governments and enhancing dialogue with parties to armed conflict.

"The Security Council also commends the work carried out by UNICEF as well as other relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, within their respective mandates, the child protection advisers of United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions in cooperation with national Governments and relevant civil society actors.

"The Security Council encourages the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in mainstreaming child protection into all peacekeeping missions, in close collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, and encourages the deployment of child protection advisers to peacekeeping operations, as well as into relevant peacebuilding and political missions.

"The Security Council invites the Peacebuilding Commission to continue to promote child protection in post-conflict situations under its consideration.

"Given the regional dimension of some conflicts, the Security Council encourages Member States, United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions and United Nations country teams to establish appropriate strategies and coordination mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection concerns such as recruitment, release and reintegration of children.

"The Security Council recognizes the important role of education in armed conflict areas, including as a means to achieve the goal of halting and preventing recruitment and re-recruitment of children in violation of applicable international law, and calls upon all parties concerned to continue to ensure that all children associated with armed forces and groups systematically have access to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes where they can benefit, inter alia, from education.

"The Security Council also urges parties to armed conflict to refrain from actions that impede children's access to education, in particular attacks or threats of attack on school children or teachers as such, the use of schools for military operations, and attacks on schools that are prohibited by applicable international law.

"The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to submit his next report by May 2010 on the implementation of its resolutions on children and armed conflict."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2009/9.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 7.50 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6115

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6115th meeting

Thursday, 30 April 2009, 4.30 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Heller	(Mexico)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Tiendrébéogo
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Turkey	Mr. Ilkin
	Uganda	Mr. Mugoya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

The situation in Cyprus

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

09-31900 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 4.30 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Cyprus

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

After consultations among the members of the Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council commends the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders for the political leadership they have shown and warmly welcomes the progress made so far in the fully-fledged negotiations, and the leaders' joint statements.

"The Security Council strongly urges the leaders to increase the momentum in the negotiations to ensure the full exploitation of this opportunity to reach a comprehensive settlement based on a bicommunal, bizonal federation with political equality, as set out in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

"The Security Council emphasizes the importance of all parties engaging fully, flexibly and constructively and looks forward to decisive progress in the negotiations in the near future.

"The Security Council recognizes that a solution requires the support of both sides and will require the approval of both communities in separate and simultaneous referenda. In this context, the Security Council fully supports the Secretary-General's Good Offices Mission and encourages the Secretary-General's Special Adviser to continue to offer the leaders any support they need to achieve a settlement.

"The Security Council reiterates its full support for the process and underlines the benefits that reunification will bring to the island."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2009/10.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.

United Nations S/PV.6116

Security Council

Sixty-fourth year

Provisional

6116th meeting

Thursday, 30 April 2009, 4.35 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Heller	(Mexico)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Tiendrébéogo
	China	Mr. La Yifan
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Skračić
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Turkey	Mr. İlkin
	Uganda	Mr. Mugoya
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Ms. Rice
	Viet Nam	Mr. Bui The Giang

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan (S/2009/211)

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09-31939 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 4.35 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

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The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2009/225, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by the United States of America. Members of the Council also have before them document S/2009/211, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the Sudan.

It is my understanding that the Security Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. Unless I hear any objection, I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Austria, Burkina Faso, China, Costa Rica, Croatia, France, Japan, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mexico, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Viet Nam.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There were 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 1870 (2009).

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): We are very pleased that the Council has unanimously adopted the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS). The Council's vote reflects its unwavering support for the work of the United Nations in Southern Sudan. It also reflects the Council's continued belief that the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is vital to bringing lasting peace to the people of Sudan.

After years of conflict and economic deprivation, the citizens of Sudan deserve a future of peace and promise. The Sudanese people are faced with many challenges. We are concerned about the deterioration of relations between Chad and Sudan. The relationship between those two countries affects peace throughout Sudan, and for that reason we welcome the Qatar- and Libyan-sponsored bilateral talks in Doha between Chad and Sudan as a positive step forward.

We remain, however, deeply concerned about the negative impact on the three areas caused by the Government of Sudan's 4 and 5 March expulsions of 13 international aid organizations, to say nothing of the humanitarian needs in Darfur and the suffering that its people will face as a result of the expulsions. The United States believes that there is absolutely no justification for the Government of Sudan's actions. The sudden expulsions of the non-governmental organizations put too many innocent civilians at grave risk.

The Government of Sudan bears primary responsibility for its people, and therefore we urge Sudan to take immediate steps to restore effective assistance to Sudan's most vulnerable civilians. We fully support UNMIS as it continues its work by helping to implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, to protect vulnerable civilians and to assist the people of Sudan to achieve a lasting peace.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): France fully supports the activities of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) and more generally speaking those of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations system in that country. France is firmly committed to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which UNMIS is mandated to assist. The Agreement has helped put an end to several decades of conflict and has defined a framework for peace, unity and the future development of the Sudan.

We are also firmly committed to the peaceful resolution of the Darfur crisis, which has for several years made necessary the largest humanitarian operation in the world. In that context, we back the Secretary-General's three tracks for action to address the crisis situation created by the decision of the Government of the Sudan to expel numerous

non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as clearly described in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2009/211).

In particular, we continue to call upon the Government of the Sudan to reverse the closures and expulsions of NGOs which until recently provided a key portion of the humanitarian assistance to the population, especially in the Three Areas, and to restore an environment conducive to the work of humanitarian actors. We note, as the Secretary-General notes in his report, that "the expulsions and closures have the potential to create a serious humanitarian crisis" (*S/2009/211, para. 88*).

France is committed to ensuring that the Security Council and the United Nations system follow the situation very closely, without underestimating its gravity, in order to ensure that all parties shoulder their responsibility under international humanitarian law and under the commitments they have undertaken, and to make it possible for humanitarian assistance to reach people who today desperately need it.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation welcomes the resolution that we have just adopted, reaffirming the Council's commitment to the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and to peace and stability in the Sudan. But that commitment also obliges us to raise another issue that could have negative repercussions for initiatives to promote peace and stability. I am referring specifically to the decision of the Government of the Sudan to expel and suspend humanitarian and development assistance organizations. That decision has left the Three Areas and eastern Sudan with very little support for humanitarian recovery and reintegration activities.

The provision of humanitarian aid for development in those areas is essential if the Comprehensive Peace Agreement is to be successfully implemented. That was the understanding of the Council when it considered this issue in its consultations on 6, 20 and 26 March, following briefings by the Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, the Director of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. John Holmes.

That is why, in my delegation's view, it was only natural that the resolution renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan should have included in its preambular and operative paragraphs the Council's rejection of the measures taken by the Government of the Sudan against humanitarian and development assistance organizations, given the negative implications that that decision could have for humanitarian assistance and the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. We wanted that reference to be retained in the resolution's tenth preambular paragraph and in its operative paragraph 13, as it was in all negotiated drafts until the final one.

Nevertheless, we voted today for a text that no longer contains those references. That is why we understand that, when it refers in its ninth preambular paragraph to "the events of March 4 and 5 2009", the resolution adopted today is referring to the decision to expel humanitarian and development assistance organizations.

I conclude by reiterating that the issue of humanitarian assistance should not be linked to others of a political or judicial nature. The Government of the Sudan continues to be duty-bound to comply with the decisions adopted by the Council and with the commitments it has undertaken under various international agreements and instruments. Furthermore, it is obliged to protect its population and to comply with the norms of international law, in particular international humanitarian law.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): The Government of the United Kingdom welcomes the unanimous adoption today of resolution 1870 (2009), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS). The Security Council's unity in support of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the North-South peace process is an important signal to the Government of the Sudan and to the wider international community. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement ended one of Africa's longest and bloodiest civil wars, and it remains the bedrock for peace and security in the Sudan.

As resolution 1870 (2009) makes clear, the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement has reached a critical stage, and significant tests lie ahead: on elections; on the process of disarming and rehabilitating former combatants; on developing effective security in the border areas; on the national census, with regard to which the resolution expresses concern about the delay in announcing the

results; and on the referendum on unity, due in January 2011.

In the light of the Sudan's recent expulsion of 13 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Kingdom particularly welcomes the language in the resolution stressing the importance of providing humanitarian assistance to the civilian populations throughout the Sudan. The expulsions affect not only the people of Darfur, but also the delivery of humanitarian aid across the whole of the country, including the Three Areas on the borders between North and South.

Resolution 1870 (2009) urges the Sudan to support the three-track approach delineated by the Secretary-General to ensure continuity of humanitarian assistance. The first of those tracks is for the Sudan to reverse its decision to expel the NGOs. The United Kingdom repeats today its condemnation of that decision and, in line with resolution 1870 (2009), urges the Sudan to immediately reverse it. We hope that the Sudan will respond to the Council's call.

Finally, the United Kingdom also welcomes the request, contained in the resolution, that the Secretary-General develop benchmarks for measuring and tracking progress in the implementation of UNMIS's mandate and assess progress against these in his regular reports. That request, relating to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, follows similar requests from the Council on other peacekeeping missions, such as the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is an important step in the Council's efforts to further improve the effectiveness and direction of United Nations peacekeeping across the continent of Africa.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): Japan welcomes the unanimous adoption of resolution 1870 (2009). We strongly hope for the continuous, effective implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and urge redoubled support for the extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), which is playing a crucial role in assisting in the implementation of the Agreement.

On this occasion, we express our deep concern at the expulsion of major non-governmental organizations by the Sudan, which has seriously affected humanitarian and reconstruction efforts throughout the Sudan, including the transitional Three Areas. We are also concerned at the consequences that the expulsion will have for the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Japan supports the Secretary-General's call for the Sudanese Government to reconsider its decision. The cooperation, jointly sponsored and promoted by the United Nations and the Government of the Sudan, in addressing the humanitarian gap, including the joint technical assessment mission, is a very positive step. However, it is not clear whether the resulting gap can be adequately filled in that manner. We urge the Government of the Sudan to provide a secure environment for smooth humanitarian activities.

As the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement enters a very critical phase, it is essential to accelerate the political process. We urge both parties to make further efforts to that end, and we call on the international community to continue to support such efforts.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.